

A
Short View
John OF *Arden*
TRAGEDY;

It's *Original, Excellency, and*
Corruption.

WITH SOME
Reflections on *Shakespear*,
and other Practitioners for
the S T A G E.

By Mr. *Rymer*, Servant to their Majesties.

— *Hodieque manent vestigia ruris.* Hor.

L O N D O N,

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE

Charles,

Earl of *Dorset* and *Middlesex*, Baron *Buckhurst*, and
L^d. *Chamberlain* of their
Majesties Household, Kt.
of the Most Noble Order
of the *Garter*, Lord
Lieutenant of *Sussex*, and
one of their Majesties
most Honourable *Privy*
Council.

My Lord,

Contemplation and Action
have their different Seasons.
It was after the defeat of *Antony*, and

The Epistle Dedicatory.

the business of the World pretty well over, when *Virgil* and *Horace* came to be so distinguish'd at Court.

Alexander, who had given so good proof of his Judgment by the Honours paid to the Memory of *Homer*, and of *Pindar*, found in his time no better Poet than *Chærilus*. *Chærilus* to the great *Alexander*, was for *Laureate* and *Historiographer*.

When once again the business of the World is over, Now my Lord, that the *Muses* Commonweal is become your Province, what may we not expect? This I say, not with intent to apply that of *Quintilian* on *Augustus Cæsar*, *Parum Diis visum est esse eum Maximum Poetarum*: that were a Common Topick: But because, when some years ago, I tryed the Publick with Observations concerning the Stage; It was principally your Countenance that buoy'd me up,

The Epistle Dedicatory.

up, and supported a Righteous Cause against the Prejudice and Corruption then reigning.

I would not raise up again the Spirit of the late Prince of Conti; His *Traite contre la Comedie*, has by others been termed *la defense de la vertu*. My zeal goes no higher than the Doctrine of *Horace*, and *Aristotle*; and the Primitive Fathers of Dramatick Poetry: If that Purity may be Allow'd under a Christian Dispensation.

The World, surely, other Matters apart, owes much to Cardinal *Richelieu*, for his Encouragement to the *Belles Lettres*. From thence we may reckon, that we begin to understand the Epick Poem by the means of *Bossu*; and Tragedy by *Monsieur Dacier*. The World is not agreed which is the Nobler Poem: *Plato* and *Bossu* prefer the

The Epistle, &c.

former; *Aristotle* and *Dacier* declare for Tragedy. Three, indeed, of the Epick (the two by *Homer* and *Virgil's Æneids*) are reckon'd in the degree of Perfection; But amongst the Tragedies, only the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles*. That, by *Corneille*, and by others, of a Modern Cut, *quantum Mutatus* ! but I already trespass too long upon your time, who am,

My Lord,

Your ever Bounden Faithful

Humble Servant.

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(1)

C H A P. I.

The C O N T E N T S.

The Chorus keeps the Poet to Rules. A Show to the Spectators. Two Senses to be pleased. The Eye, by the Show, and by the Action. Plays Acted without Words. Words often better out of the way. Instances in Shakespear. Ben. Johnson and Seneca Noted. To the Ear, Pronunciation is all in all. The Story of Demosthenes. Mistakes in Judging. Two sorts of Judges. At Athens a Third sort. Judges upon Oath. In France Judges divided about the Cid. Cardinal Richelieu against the Majority. At the Thomas Morus, weeping miawares. Horace Angry with Shows. The French Opera inconsistent with Nature and Good sense. Burlesk Verse. At Paris Christ's Passion in Burlesk. A Tragedy of Aeschylus. The defeat of Xerxes. The Subject, and Oeconomy. How imitated for our English Stage. King John of France, Francis I. Prisoners. The Spanish Armado in 83. An imitation, recommended to Mr. Dreyden.

WHAT Reformation may not we expect now, that in *France* they see the necessity of a *Chorus* to their Tragedies? *Boyer*, and *Racine*, both of the Royal Academy, have led the Dance; they have tried the success in the last Plays that were Presented by them.

B

The

The *Chorus* was the root and original, and is certainly always the most necessary part of Tragedy.

The *Spectators* thereby are secured, that their Poet shall not juggle, or put upon them in the matter of *Place*, and *Time*, other than is just and reasonable for the representation.

And the *Poet* has this benefit; the *Chorus* is a goodly *Show*, so that he need not ramble from his Subject out of his Wits for some foreign Toy or Hobby-horse, to humor the Multitude.

(a) *Aristotle* tells us of *Two Senses* that must be pleas'd, our *Sight*, and our *Ears*: And it is in vain for a *Poet* (with *Bays* in the Rehearsal) to complain of Injustice, and the wrong Judgment in his *Audience*, unless these *Two senses* be gratified.

The worst on it is, that most People are wholly led by these *Two senses*, and follow them upon content, without ever troubling their Noddle farther.

How many Plays owe all their success to a rare *Show*? Even in the days of *Horace*, enter on the Stage a Person in a *Costly strange Habit*, Lord! *What Clapping, what Noise and Thunder*, as Heaven and Earth were coming together! yet not one word spoken.

(a) Poetica.

Dixit

*Dixit adhuc aliquid? nil, sane, quid placit Ergo?
Lana Terenzino violas imitata veneno.*

Was there ought said? troth, no, What then did touch ye?
Some Prince of *Banham*, or a *Mamamouche*.

It matters not whether there be any *Plot*, any *Characters*, any *Sense*, or a wise *Word* from one end to the other, provided in our Play we have the *Senate* of *Rome*, the *Venetian Senate* in their Pontificalibus, or a *Blackamoor* *Ruffian*, or *Tom Dove*, or other Four-leg'd Hero of the Bear-Garden.

The *Eye* is a quick sense, will be in with our Fancy, and prepossess the Head strangely. Another means whereby the *Eye* misleads our Judgment is the *Action*: We go to see a Play *Acted*; in Tragedy is represented a Memorable *Action*; so the Spectators are always pleas'd to see *Action*, and are not often so ill-natur'd to pry into, and examine whether it be Proper, Just, Natural, in season, or out of season. *Bays* in the Rehearsal well knew this secret: The *Two Kings* are at their *Coranto*; nay, the *Moon* and the *Earth* dance the *Hey*; any thing in Nature, or against Nature, rather than allow the *Serious Council*, or other dull business to interrupt, or obstruct *Action*.

This thing of *Action* finds the blindside of humane-kind an hundred ways. We laugh and weep with those that laugh or weep; we gape, stretch, and are very *dotterels* by example.

Action is speaking to the Eyes; and all *Europe* over Plays have been represented with great applause, in a Tongue unknown, and sometimes without any Language at all.

Many, peradventure, of the Tragical Scenes in *Shakespear*, cry'd up for the *Action*, might do yet better without words: Words are a sort of heavy baggage, that were better out of the way, at the push of *Action*; especially in his *bombast Circumstance*, where the Words and *Action* are seldom akin, generally are inconsistent, at cross purposes, embarrass or destroy each other; yet to those who take not the words distinctly, there may be something in the buz and sound, that like a drone to a Bagpipe may serve to set off the *Action*: For an instance of the former, Would not a rap at the door better express *Jago's* meaning? than

———— Call aloud.

Jago. Do with like timerous accent, and
dire yel,

As

*As when by night and negligence the fire
Is spied in populous Cities.*

For, What Ship? Who is Arrived? The
Answer is,

*'Tis one Jago, Auncient to the General,
He has had most Favourable and Happy
speed;
Tempests themselves, high Seas, and howling
Winds,
The guttered Rocks, and congregated Sands,
Traytors ensteep'd, to clog the guiltless Keel,
As having sense of Beauty, do omit
Their common Natures, letting go safely by
The divine Deldemonia.*

Is this the Language of the Exchange,
or the Ensuring-Office? Once in a man's
life, he might be content at *Bedlam* to hear
such a rapture. In a Play one should
speak like a man of business, his speech
must be *Πολυτιμος*, which the *French* render
Agissinte; the *Italians*, *Negotiosa*, and *Ope-
rativa*; but by this Gentleman's talk one
may well guess he has nothing to do.
And he has many Companions, that are

— *Hey day!*

I know not what to do, nor what to say. (b)

(b) Rehearfal.

It was then a strange imagination in *Ben. Johnson*, to go stuff out a Play with *Tully's* Orations. And in *Seneca*, to think his dry *Mora's*, and a tedious train of Sentences might do feats, or have any wonderful operation in the *Drama*.

Some go to *see*, others to *hear* a Play. The Poet should please both; but be sure that the *Spectators* be satisfied, whatever Entertainment he give his *Audience*.

But if neither the *Show*, nor the *Action* cheats us, there remains still a notable vehicle to carry off nonsense, which is the *Pronunciation*.

*By the loud Trumpet, which our Courage aids ;
We learn, That sound, as well as sense persuades. (c)*

Demosthenes (d) had a good stock of Sense, was a great Master of Words; could turn a period, and draw up his tropes in a line of Battel; and fain would he have seen some effect of his Orations; nobody was mov'd, nobody minded him. He goes to the Playhouse, bargains with an Actor, and learn'd of him to speak Roundly and Gracefully: From that time, Who but *Demosthenes*? Never such a leading man! whenever he spake, no division,

(c) Waller. (d) Plutarch, Demosthen.

not a vote to the contrary, the whole House were with him, *Nemine Contradicente*. This change observ'd, a Friend went to him for the secret; Tell me, says he, your *Nostrum*, tell me your Receipt; What is the main Ingredient that makes an Orator? *Demosthenes* answered, *Pronunciation*: What then the next thing? *Pronunciation*: Pray then, What the Third? Still the answer was *Pronunciation*.

Now this was at *Athens*, where want of Wit was never an objection against them. So that it is not in *Song* only, that a *good voice* diverts us from the Wit and Sense. From the Stage, the Bar or the Pulpit, a *good voice* will prepossess our ears, and having seized that Pass, is in a fair way to surprize our Judgment.

Considering then what power the *Show*, the *Action*, and the *Pronunciation* have over us, it is no wonder that wise men often mistake, and give an hasty Judgment, which upon a review is justly set aside.

Hirace divides the Judges into *Majores Numero*, and the few or better sort; and these for the most part were of different Judgments: The like distinction may hold in all other Nations; only at *Athens* there was a third sort, who were Judges upon (f) Oath,

(f) *Plutarch, Cimon.*

Judges in Commission, by the Government sworn to do right, and determine the Merits of a Play, without favour or affection.

But amongst the Moderns, never was a Cause canvass'd with so much heat, between the Play-Judges, as that in *France*, about *Corneille's* Tragedy of the *Cid*. The Majority were so fond of it, that with them it became a Proverb, (f) *Cela est plus beau que le Cid*. On the other side, Cardinal *Richelieu* damn'd it, and said, *All the pudder about it, was only between the ignorant people, and the men of judgment.*

Yet this Cardinal with so nice a taste, had not many years before been several times to see acted the Tragedy of *Sir Thomas Moor*, and as often wept at the Representation. Never were known so many people (g) crowded to death, as at that Play. Yet was it the Manufacture of *Jehan de Serre*, one about the form of our *Fleyno*, or *Thomas Jordan*. The same *de Serre*, that dedicated a Book of Meditations to *K. Charles I.* and went home with Pockets full of Medals and Reward.

By this Instance we see a man the most sharp, and of the greatest penetration was imposed upon by these cheating Sences,

(f) *Pelisson. Hist. Acad.*

(g) *Parasse Reform.*

the Eyes and the Ears, which greedily took in the impressi^on from the *Show*, the *Action*, and from the Emphasis and *Pronunciation*; tho there was no great matter of *Fable*, no *Manners*, no fine *Thoughts*, no *Language*; that is, nothing of a Tragedy, nothing of a Poet all the while.

Horace was very angry with these empty *Shows* and Vanity, which the Gentlemen of his time ran like mad after.

---*Insanos oculos, et gaudia vana.*

What would he have said to the *French Opera* of late so much in vogue? There it is for you to bewitch your *eyes*, and to charm your *ears*. There is a Cup of Enchantment, there is Musick and Machine; *Circe* and *Calipso* in conspiracy against Nature and good Sense. 'Tis a Debauch the most insinuating, and the most pernicious; none would think an *Opera* and Civil Reason, should be the growth of one and the same Climate. But shall we wonder at any thing for a Sacrifice to the *Grand Monarch*? such Worship, such Idol. All flattery to him is insipid, unless it be prodigious: Nothing reasonable, or within compass can come near the Matter. All must be monstrous, enormous, and outrageous to Nature, to be like him, or give any Eccho on his Appetite.

Were

Were *Rabelais* alive again, he would look on his *Garagantua* as but a Pygmy.

(h)--*The Heroes Race excels the Poets Thought.*
The Academy Royal may pack up their Modes and Methods, & *pense ingenieuses*; the *Racines* and the *Corneilles* must all now dance to the Tune of *Baptista*. Here is the *Opera*; here is *Machine* and *Baptista*, farewell *Apollo* and the *Muses*.

Away with your *Opera* from the Theatre. better had they become the *Heathen Temples*; for the *Corybantian Priests*, and (*Semiviros Gallos*) the old *Capons of Gaul*, than a People that pretend from *Charlemagne*, or descend from the undoubted *Loyns of German and Norman Conquerors*.

In the *French*, not many years before was observed the like vicious appetite, and immoderate Passion for *vers Burlesque*.

They were currant in *Italy* an hundred years, ere they passed to this side the *Alps*; But when once they had their turn in *France*, so right to their humour, they over-ran all; (i) nothing wise or sober might stand in their way. All were possessed with the Spirit of *Burlesk*, from *Doll* in the Dairy, to the *Matrons at Court*, and *Maids of Honour*. Nay, so far went the

(h) Waller.

(i) Pelisson *Hist. Acad.*

Frenzy,

Frenzy, that no Bookfeller would meddle on any terms without *Burlesk*; infomuch that *Ann.* 1649. was at *Paris* printed a serious Treatise with this Title,

---*La Passion de Nostre Seigneur, En vers Burlesques.* †

If we cannot rise to the Perfection of intrigue in *Sophocles*, let us sit down with the honesty and simplicity of the first beginners in Tragedy: As for example;

One of the most simple now extant, is the *Persians* by *Aeschylus*.

Some ten years after that *Darius* had been beaten by the *Greeks*, *Xerxes* (his Father *Darius* being dead) brought against them such Forces by Sea and Land, the like never known in History: *Xerxes* went also in person, with all the *Maison de Roy*, *Satrapie* and *Gendarmery*; all were routed. Some forty years afterwards the Poet takes hence his subject for a Tragedy.

The Place is by *Darius's Tomb*, in the *Metropolis* of *Persia*.

The Time is the Night, an hour or two before day break.

First, on the Stage are seen 15 Persons in Robes, proper for the *Satrapa*, or Chief Princes in *Persia*: Suppose they met so early at the Tomb, then sacred, and ordinarily resorted to

to by people troubled in mind, on the accounts of Dreams, or any thing not boding good. They talk of the state of Affairs: Of Greece; and of the Expedition. After some time take upon them to be the Chorus.

The next on the Stage comes Atossa the Queen Mother of Persia; she cou'd not lie in Bed for a Dream that troubled her; so in a fit of Devotion comes to her Husband's Tomb, there luckily meets with so many Wise-men and Counsellors to ease her Mind by interpreting her Dream; This with the Chorus makes the Second Act.

After this, their Disorder, Lamentation and Wailing, is such, that Darius is disturbed in his Tomb, so his Ghost appears, and belike stays with them till Day break: Then the Chorus concludes the Act.

In the Fourth Act come the Messengers with sad Tidings, which, with the reflections and troubles thereupon, and the Chorus, fill out this Act.

In the Last, Xerxes himself arrives, which gives occasion of condoling, houlings, and distraction enough, to the end of the Tragedy.

One may imagine how a Grecian Audience that lov'd their Countrey, and glory'd in the Vertue of their Ancestors wou'd be affected with this Representation.

Never

Never appeared on the Stage a Ghost of greater consequence. The *Grand Monarch Darius*, who had been so shamefully beaten by those petty Provinces of the United *Grecians*, could not now lye quiet in his Grave for them ; but must be raised from the dead again, to be witness of his Son's Disgrace, and of their Triumph.

Were a Tragedy after this Model to be drawn for our Stage, *Greece* and *Persia* are too far from us : The Scene must be laid nearer home : As at the *Louvre* ; and instead of *Xerxes* we might take *John*, King of *France*, and the Batel of *Poitiers*. So if the *Germans* or *Spaniards* were to compose a Play, on the Batel of *Pavia*, and King *Francis* there taken Prisoner, the Scene shou'd not be laid at *Vienna*, or at *Madrid*, but at the *Louvre*. For there the Tragedy wou'd principally operate, and there all the Lines most naturally centre.

But perhaps the memorable Adventure of the *Spaniards* in 88. against *England*, may better resemble that of *Xerxes*: Suppose then a Tragedy call'd *The Invincible Armado*.

The Place, then for the Action, may be at *Madrid*, by some Tomb, or solemn place of resort ; or if we prefer a Turn in it from good to bad Fortune, then some Drawing-Room in the Palace near the King's Bed-chamber.

The

The Time to begin, Twelve at Night.

The Scene opening presents 15 Grantees of Spain, with their most solemn Beards and Accoutrements, met there (suppose) after some Ball, or other publick occasion. They talk of the state of Affairs, the greatness of their Power, the vastness of their Dominions, and prospect to be infallibly, ere long, Lords of all. With this prosperity and goodly thoughts transported, they at last form themselves into the Chorus, and walk such measures, with Musick, as may become the gravity of such a Chorus.

Then enter two or three of the Cabinet Council, who now have leave to tell the Secret; That the Preparations and the Invincible Armade was to conquer England. These, with part of the Chorus, may communicate all the Particulars, the Provisions, and the Strength by Sea and Land; the certainty of success, the Advantages by that accession; and the many Tun of Tar-Barrels for the Hereticks. These Topicks may afford matter enough, with the Chorus, for the Second Act.

In the Third Act, these Gentlemen of the Cabinet cannot agree about sharing the Preferments of England, and a mighty broil there is amongst them. One will not be content unless he is King of Man; another will be Duke of Lancaster. One, that had seen a Coronation in England, will by all means be Duke of Aquitayn,

quitayn, or else Duke of Normandy. And on this occasion two Competitors have a juster occasion to work up, and shew the Muscles of their Passion, then *Shakespear's* *Cassius* and *Brutus*. After, the Chorus.

The Fourth Act may, instead of *Atossa*, present some old Dames of the Court, us'd to dream Dreams, and to see Sprights, in their Night-Rails, and Forhead Cloaths, to alarm our Gentlemen with new apprehensions, which make distraction and disorders sufficient to furnish out this Act.

In the last Act the King enters, and wisely discourse against Dreams and Hobgoblins, to quiet their minds : And the more to satisfie them, and take off their fright, he lets them to know that *St. Loyala* had appeared to him, and assured him that all is well. This said, comes a Messenger of the ill News ; his Account is lame, suspected, he sent to Prison. A second Messenger, that came away long after, but had a speedier Passage, his account is distinct, and all their loss credited. So in fine, one of the Chorus concludes with that of *Euripides* : Thus you see the Gods bring things to pass often, otherwise than was by man proposed.

In this Draught we see the Fable, and the Characters or Manners of *Spaniards*, and room for fine Thoughts, and noble Expressions, as much as the Poet can afford.

The

The First Act gives a Review, or Ostentation of their Strength in Battel-array.

In the Second, they are in motion for the Attack, and we see where the Action falls.

In the Third they quarrel about dividing the Spoil.

In the Fourth, They meet with a Repulse; are beaten off by a Van-Guard of Dreams, Goblins, and Terrors of the Night.

In the Fifth, They rally under their King in Person, and make good their Ground, till overpowered by fresh Troops of Conviction; and mighty Truth prevails.

For the First Act, a Painter would draw *Spain* hovering, and ready to strike at the Universe.

In the Second, just taking *England* in her Pounces.

But it must not be forgotten in the Second Act, that there be some *Spanish-Fryar* or *Jesuit*, as *St. Xaviere* (for he may drop in by miracle, any where) to ring in their ears *the Northern Heresie*; like *Jago* in *Shakespear*, *Put Money in thy Purse, I say, Put Money in thy Purse.* So often may he repeat *the Northern Heresie.* Away with your *Secular Advantages*; *I say, the Northern Heresie*; there is *Roast-meat* for the Church; *Voto a Christo, the Northern Heresie.*

(17)

If Mr. *Dryden* might try his Pen on this Subject, doubtless, to an Audience that heartily love their Countrey, and glory in the Vertue of their Ancestors, his imitation of *Aeschylus* would have better success, and would *Pit, Box* and *Gallery*, far beyond any thing now in possession of the Stage, however wrought up by the unimitable *Shakespeare*.

C

CHAP.

C H A P. II.

The C O N T E N T S.

Tragedy before Thespis. *A Religious Worship: Musick and Dance follow the Chorus: Governments care of the Stage, as of Religion. No Private Person to build a Chappel. Young men not to present Plays. Didascalia, and Tragedy-doctors. Difficulty. Publick Revenue for Plays. Theatre-money sacred. End of Poetry. What effect by Aeschylus. Of his Persians. Schools for Boys. Stage for Men. Character of Aristophanes. Opinion of the Persian Ambassador. The State takes aim from him. Sparing not his Master the People. Democratical Corruption. His Address unimitable. Comedy after him dwindles. Somewhat like him amongst the Moderns. Rehearsal. Alchymist. Vertuoso. Rabilais.*

End of Poetry with the Romans. Tragedies by their Great Men. All Translation. Numa Pompilius. Old Romans aversion to Poetry. 12 Tables. Stage-Plays to remove the Plague. Never improv'd by them. The use hardly known. Far short of the Greeks. Horace and Virgil. Their Conduct. Terence's Complaint. Wanted Show. And Action. Athens the Soil for Dramatick Poetry. A forreign Plant with the Romans. They for the Eye, pleas'd more with the outside. Their Theatres considerable, not the Tragedies. Horace's Reason.

Authors generally look no higher than Thespis for the Original of Tragedy; yet Plato reckons it much ancients.

Minos, (a) says he, for all his wisdom, was

(a) Minos dial.

OVER-

overseen in making war upon *Athens*; where lived so many Tragic Poets, that represented him, and fixed on him and his Family a Name and Character never to be wiped off.

The *Judges of Hell*, *Pasiphae*, and her *Minotaur*, are upon record to all Posterity.

All agree, that in the beginning it was purely a Religious *Worship*, and solemn Service for their *Holy-days*. Afterwards it came from the *Temples* to the *Theatre*, admitted of a Secular Allay, and grew to be some Image of the World, and Humane Life. When it was brought to the utmost perfection by *Sophocles*, the *Chorus* continued a necessary part of the *Tragedy*; but that Musick and the Dancing which came along with the *Chorus*, were meer Religion, were no part of the *Tragedy*, nor had any thing of Philosophy or Instruction in them.

The *Government* had the same care of these Representations, as of their Religion, and as much caution about them. The Laws would not permit a private person to make a Chappel, raise an Altar, or consecrate an Image; otherwise all places would in time be so cramm'd from the Devotion of Women and weak heads, that a man should not set a foot, nor find elbow-room, for Gods, and Shrines, consecrated stuff.

The like providence had they for the Theatre. No (b) Poet under the age of 30 or 40 years was allow'd to present any Play to be acted. Seldens Marimora, and other Chronologers inform us that *Aeschylus* had the victory, when he was 40 years old: And *Euripides* not till he was 43. The dramatick Poet was styled *Comedodidascalus*, and *Tragadodidasculus*, as one should say, *Comedy-doctor*, and *Tragedy-doctor*: We find too the Word *didascalia*, with the Titles of *Terence's* Comedies, which afterwards the *Latins* came to imitate, as *Cicero* in *Brut. Livius qui primus fabulam Docuit*, And *Hor. ---vel qui Docuere Togatas*. So to write a Play, in the opinion of *Aristophanes*, *Comodidascalia*, is of all things the most difficult.

More (c) of their publick money was spent about the *Chorus*, and other charges and decorations of their Theatre, than in all their Wars with the Kings of *Persia*.

And when brought to their last extremity, that no other Bank remain'd for them, wherewith to carry on a War, without which War they could not longer expect to be a People, the delicate turn us'd by *Demosthenes*, in starting the motion, for applying this Theatre-money to the War, is observ'd as a (d) Masterpiece of address by the Orators. Did I say (quoth *Demosthenes*) the The-

(b) Schol. Aristo. (c) Plutarch. (d) Demitr. Libanius.

arre-money may be applied to the War? no,
by Jove, not I.

Monasteries and Church Lands were never with us so sacred.

In the days of *Aristophanes*, it was on all hands agreed, that the best *Poet* was he who had done the most to make men vertuous and serviceable to the Publick. In a *Dialogue of the dead*, (c) where they dispute the precedence, says *Aeschylus*, Consider what sort of men I left you.

Men generous, four Cubits high, not such as
now-a-days,

That slip the collar when they should serve
their Countrey.

Indifferent, loose (f) prudential, (g) trick-
ing Fellows;

Nought did they breathe, but broad Swords,
Battle-Axes,

The Helmets lofty pride, (h) Jack-Boots, Ha-
geons,

With true (i) Beef-courage.

So when his *Princes at Thebes*, and when his *Persians* were acted, not a Spectator, but bit his Thumbs with impatience for the Field, to give the Enemy Battle. So his *Patroclus*, his *Tencer*, and his *Thimaleon's* were represented only to spur on his Coun-

(c) *Aristoph.* *Frogs.* (f) Κοβάλως (g) Πανεργως
(h) κνημὶ das (i) βορμὴ ἐπατεροσλος.

treymen to Vertue, and provoke them to a generous Emulation.

And here *Aristophanes* declares another Rule (which *Plato* takes from him) That if any thing looks with an ill face, the Poet must hide it; not suffer it, by any means, to be shown or represented in a Play: Because as the Schools are for teaching Children, the Stage should be for men of riper years and Judgment. So that a *Poet* must be sure that his *Doctrine* be good and wholesome.

This Author appears in his Function, a man of wonderful zeal for Vertue, and the good of his Countrey; and he laid about him with an undaunted resolution, as it were some Christian Martyr, for his Faith and Religion. He plainly *ran a Muck* at all manner of Vice where-ever he saw it, be it in the greatest Philosophers, the greatest Poets, the Generals, or the Ministers of State.

The *Persian* Ambassador, who was Lierger there (as formerly the *French* with us) seeing the Town all at his beck; and the Government taking aim, turning out, disgracing, impeaching, banishing, outlawing and attainting the great men, according as he hinted, or held up the finger, the Ambassador, not understanding the *Athenian* temper,

temper, was astonish'd at the man.

And, for all the Democracy, no less bold was he with his Sovereign, Legislative-people: Representing (k) them, taking Bribes, selling their Votes, bought off; Nay, the whole House led away for (l) a Dish of Sprats, or penny-worth of Coriander.

----- ἄγε βέλιν ὀλιν

ἔβλεπε χειρῶν αἰνῶν ἀναλαβὼν ἐλάλυστα.

He tells 'em (as the practice amongst them) that the Government had no occasion for men of wit or honesty. The most ignorant, the most impudent, and the greatest Rogue stood fairest always for a Place, and the best qualified to be their chief Minister. He tells them, nothing shall fright him; Truth and Honesty are on his side; he has *the heart of Hercules*, will speak what is just and generous, tho *Cerberus*, and all the kennel of Hell-hounds were loo'd upon him.

But then his Address was admirable: He would make the Truth visible and palpable, and every way sensible to them. The Art and the Application; his strange Fetches, his lucky Starts; his odd Inventions, the wild Turns, Returns, and Counter-turns were never match'd, nor are ever to be reached again.

(k) Aristoph. equites.

(l) Περὶ ἀφύων.

Who follow'd him in Comedy were content to trifle with the Punks, the Pandars, the Ruffian, the old Chuff, the *Davus* or Knave of the Family, and his young Master.

Amongst the Moderns, our *Rehearsal* is some resemblance of his *Frogs*: The *Vertuoso's* Character, and Ben Johnson's *Alchymist* give some shadow of his *Clouds*; but nowhere, peradventure wanders so much of his Spirit, as in the *French Rabelais*.

We may trust *Horace* for the sense of the *Latins*, at the time when they were best able to judge. Then they reckon'd, as the *Greeks* had done, that the *End of Poetry* was as well to be profitable, as to be pleasant.

----*Simul & jucunda, & idonea dicere Vita.*

But what their practice, or how they improv'd the *drama*, we see not. They tell of an *Oedipus*, written by *Julius Caesar*; an *Alcmaon*, by *Catullus*; a *Thyestes* by *Gracchus*; an *Adrastus*, and an *Ajax* by *Augustus Caesar*; an *Astyonax*, by *Rutilius*; a *Medea* by *Mecenas*; a *Medea* by *Ovid*: with *Seneca's Medea* too. The Names of these several Tragedies import, that these great men were content to translate from the *Greek*, no farther then had their ambition carried them. *Horace* says, indeed,

Non

*Non minimum meruere decus vestigia Græci.
Ausi deferere, & Celebrare domestica facta.*

We find the name of *Octavia* by *Mæcenas*; and *Diomedes* Instances in the *Brutus*, the *Decius*, and the *Murcellis*, for *Fables* of the *Roman* Garb; but we know no farther of them, what success they had, nor how nobly they perform'd what they had so boldly undertaken, in writing alone, without a *Greek* Copy before 'em. It seems but a faint Commendation (the *Non minimum*) that *Horace* gives them.

The *Romans* were a rougher sort of People; and wonderful jealous were they of the *Grecian Arts*, or of any Commerce with a Politer Nation. Till *Numa Pompilius*, very little had they of either Religion or Poetry amongst them. Nor made he use of it farther, than for the *Hymns*, and *Anthems* at the Altars and Sacrifice: *Secular Poetry* had they none. And indeed at that time it was hardly safe for *Poetry* to stir from Sanctuary; for in the world, the rigid Fathers had given the *Poets* an ugly name, calling them *Grassatores*; which in *Modern Italian* may be rendred *Banditi*.

It was with much ado, and under an Usurpation by the *Decemvirs*, that they stooped to a correspondence with *Greece* for
the

the commodity of their Laws ; which were not till then imported ; and from thence we hear of the Twelve Tables.

For the (m) *Stage-Plays* : It was a Plague that first introduced them. They try, by that strange Worship, to appease their Gods ; and avert the Judgment so heavy on them. But their first *Secular Plays* were taught by *Livius Andronicus*, some 200 years after the Twelve Tables at *Rome*. He set up for some skill in this *Dramatick* way, *Translating* from the *Greek*.

Nor did *Plautus* that followed him attempt any farther, than to *Translate* : yet carried he the *Drama* beyond what any *Roman* since could pretend to. He *Translates* indeed, but with that spirit and mastery, one might take him for an Original ; did we not always find the *Scene* at *Athens* ; and all the pother is some little jilting story, or knavish pranck : Proposing only some trifling silly Mirth or Pastime.

He had not the courage to trace *Aristophanes*, He had not an *Heart of Hercules*, to combat Vice. Perhaps in his time, they had not yet learn'd to make their *Doctrine* profitable ; for he commends one for a rarity.

*Hujusmodi paucas poeta reperiunt Comœdias
Ubi boni Meliores fiant.*

After all the goodly commendations and

pretty things, by *Quintilian* (n) acknowledged due to *Plautus*, and *Terence*, frankly he concludes, *in Comedia maxime Claudicamus* — *vix levem Consequimur umbram* ; That the Roman is infinitely short of the Greek Comedy, hardly comes up to the shadow of it. *Horace* would fain with some colour, (o) make good the Comparison betwixt the Romans and the Greeks; on that Topick, to flatter *Augustus*. But *Virgil*, with no disadvantage to his Compliment, gave up the Cause.

Excudent alii —

*Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento.
He tibi erunt Artes* —

Let them have all the praises due to their polite Learning: To govern and to give Laws, be these thy Arts, O Cæsar! this is thy glory without a Rival.

On other occasions *Horace* declares his mind freely enough.

Terence complains heavily that he could not keep his Audience together: One while they ran after the Gladiators, another time the Blockheads would be gaping at a Rope-Dancer.

— *Rumor venit datum iri gladiatores—
---neque spectari, neque cognosci potuerit,*

() l. 6. () *Epist.*

Ita

*Ita populus, studio stupidus in funambulo,
Animum occuparat —*

Here might be a just Fable, true Characters, good Sense, and neat Expression. Here might be Nature and Morality in a delicate turn of Words: But where is the *Show*? where is the *Action*, that are the *Factotum* to the Spectators?

Upon the whole; This dramattick Poetry was like a foreign Plant amongst them, the Climate not very kindly, and cultivated but indifferently; so might put forth Leaves and Blossoms, without yielding any Fruit of much importance.

Athens was the genuine Soyl for it, there it took, there it flourished, and ran up to overtop every thing secular and sacred: There had this Poetry the Honour, the Pomps, and the Dignity; their Regalia, and their Pontificalia.

But the *Romans*, mostly look'd no deeper than the Show. They took up with the outside and Portico; their Genius dwelt in their eye; there they fed it, there indulg'd and pamper'd it immoderately: So that their *Theatres* and their *Amphitheatres* will always be remembred, tho their *Tragedy* and *Comedy* be only shadow; or *Magni Nominis umbra*.

They reckon'd these matters of wit and speculation, not so consistent with the
fe-

severity of an active warlike people : something of their old *Saturn* lay heavy in their heads to the very last.

—— *Hodieque manent vestigia ruris,*
says *Horace*.

And he gives the Reason ;

Serus enim Græcis admovit acumina Chartis :
Et post Punica bella quietus querere capit,
Quid Sophocles, quid Thespis, & Aeschylus uti-
le ferrent.

C H A P. III.

The C O N T E N T S.

The first Christians cry against Idols, Stage-Plays, Pagan Worship. Apostolical Constitutions. Greek and Latin Fathers. Tertullian's Concept. Councils against Heathen Learning. Greek-Wisdom. St. Hierom, St. Austin, their Sin of Heathen Books. A Canon that no Bishop read an Heathen Book. Julians Project. The Christians countermine. A Christian Homer, Pindar, and Euripides. Stage-Plays particularly level'd at. The same heat at this day in the Spanish Jesuits. Pedro de Guzman against Stage-Plays, and Bull-feasts. The Name of Poet a Bugbear at the Reformation. The Heresie charged on Sing-Songs, and Stage-Plays. Marot's Psalms. How in vogue at the French Court. Reasons against Stage-Plays. Lactantius. The same 2000 years ago by Plato. Tragedy, Homer, Aeschylus. Objections by Aristophanes.

WHEN our first Christians had scuffled out their way from amongst the *Jews*, and turn'd their back on *Palestine*, they

they were put to a new sort of Game with the *Gentiles*.

The *Law* and the *Old-Testament-Prophets* stood 'em no longer in stead; they must now conjure up the *Sibyls*, and call the *Philosophers* to their assistance. And as *Idolatry* had been the most roaring sin amongst the *Isralites*; their main Cry still is against *Idols*; and nothing stood so full in their face as did the *Theatres*; where *Tragedies* and *Commedies* on the *Good Times* and *Festivals* were presented as the greatest and most solemn part of the *Pagan Worship*: For these had their *Altars*, and the particular *Gods* to which they were consecrated. (a) *Idolatrie ab initio dicata, habent prophanationis sue maculam.*

No wonder then if the *Theatre*, with all its *Ministers* and dependants, had a very ill name in the first *Ages* of *Christianity*. Hence it was, that if any body had to do with the (b) *Theatre*, the *Apostolical Constitutions* would not allow him *Baptism*. *Saint Cyril* afterwards declares, that when *In our Baptism* we say, *I renounce thee, Satan, and all thy works and Poms: Those Poms of the Devil are Stage-Plays, and the like vanities.* To the same Tune *Tertullian*, (c) *That in our Baptism renouncing the Devil and his Poms, we cannot go to a Stage-Play without turning Apostates.*

(a) *Tertull. de Idol.* (b) c. 3. l. 8. (c) *L. de Spec.*

Hence

Hence indeed the Greek and Latin Fathers had an ample Field for their Eloquence and Declamation, before the *Arrians*, the *Gnosticks*, and other intestine Heresies sprang up to divert them. So we find *St. Cyprian*, *St. Basil*, *Clement of Alexandria*, very warm upon this occasion: And in many a good Homily *St. Chrysostom* puts it home to 'em, and cries shame, that people should listen to a Comedian with the same ears that they hear an Evangelical Preacher.

St. Austin (d) will have those that go to Plays, as bad as any that write, or act them; *Nullomodo potuisse Scriptioes & actiones recipi Comediarum, nisi mores recipientium Consonarent.* But *Tertullian* runs it off beyond all of 'em, with a notable Conceit against the Tragedians: (e) *The Devil*, says he, sets them upon their high Pantofles to give *Christ* the lie, who said, no body can add one Cubit to his Stature. *Tragados Cothurnis extulit Diabolus, quia nemo potest adjicere Cubitum unum ad Staturam suam, & sic Mendacem facere vult Christum.*

These Flashes from single Authors, and drops of heat, had no such wonderful effect, but that the Tragedian still walk'd on in his high shooes; yet might they well expect a more terrible storm from the Reverend Fathers, when met in a body together, in

(d) *Epist.* 202, *Nectar.* (e) *l. de Spect.*

Council *Oecumenical*. Then indeed began the Ecclesiastical Thunder to fly about, and presently the Theatres, Tragedy, Comedy, Bear-baiting, Gladiators, and Hereticks, are given all to the Devil, without distinction.

Nor was it sufficient for the zeal of those times to put down Plays. All Heathen Learning fell under the like censure and condemnation. One might as well have told them of the *Antipodes*, as perswaded the reading of *Tully's Offices*: They were afraid of the Greek Philosophy, like Children of a Bug-bear, least it fetch 'em away. (f)

What a plunge was (g) *St. Hierom* put to, by *Rufinus*, laying to his charge the reading of *Heathen Authors*? How *St. Austin* heartily begs God (g) pardon, for having read *Virgil with delight*, in his greener years? (h) It was not only against the *Figmenta poetarum*, that their Canons levell'd: A Council of *Carthage* would not allow that a Bishop should read any *Heathen Book*. (h)

This blind Zeal gave a pleasant prospect to the *Apostate Julian*: And he might well foresee what this new Religion was like to come to, without a new set of Miracles to support it. He therefore was, in this, for complying with them, and seconded their Designs; making a Law, that no Christian should be taught

(f) *Clem. Strom.* (g) *In Ruf.* (h) *Conc. 4. Can. 16.*

n the Heathen Schools, or make use of that Learning. This made the Christians suspect a Snake in the Grats, and put them on the other hand, (a) upon a Counter-Plot, to frustrate his project. So they set to work Apollinarius, a person, very luckily then; of manifold Learning and Wit; who, in the room of Homer, composed for them the History of the Old Testament in Heroick Verse, down to the Times of Saul.

And Comedies also in imitation of Menander, together with Trageaies, like those of Euripides; and Lyricks, exactly to the strain of Pindar. An old Author, in his life of Gregory Nazianzen, assures us how that that holy Prelate undertook and performed the very same thing, so defeated the purpose of that wicked Tyrant. These Noble Labours have all dropt short of us? What Philosophers, what Conjurers should we have been? how our Ears would ha' tingled at this day, with the three Homers, and a Triple Round of all the Græcian Poetry? But the Fathers and Councils for several Ages declaring against every thing of Heathen denomination; the Stage-Plays, of course, were cry'd out upon, as Pagan Practise, Heathen Tradition, Rags and Relicks of Paganism, and Pagan Idolatry, in

(a) Sozomen Hist. Eccles. l. 5. c. 17.

vented by the Devil, and appropriated to the Worship of false Gods.

And, upon this Topick, to this day, we find the Spanish Jesuits wondrous Eloquent. Says *Pedro de Guzman* (b); *The Christian Emperours, Kings, and Popes have cut off, and burnt with the fire of their holy Zeal, many Heads of that old Hydra of Pagan Leudness: But yet there be two Heads that still remain, which cause a world of mischief: These two Heads also must be lopt off and burnt down to rights; to wit, y Comedias y los Fuegos de Toros, Comedies, and the Bull-Feasts.*

At the beginning of the Reformation, the name of Poet was a mighty Scar-Crow to the *Mumpsimus* Doctors every where. The German Divines, and Professors at *Kullen*, were nettled and uneasy by this Poet, and the t'other Poet (c); Poet *Reuclin*, Poet *Erasmus*. Every body was reckoned a Poet that was more a Conjuror than themselves. And, belike, the *Jesuits* are still of Opinion, That the *Stage-Plays* have not done 'em service. *Campanella* tells us, that the German and Gallican Herefie began with Sing-Song, and is carried on by (d) *Comedy, and Tragedies*. *Ex Cantilenis inceptit Hæresis Germanica & Gallicana, Comædiis &*

(b) *Dis. 5. § 1.* (c) *Epist. Obsc.* (d) *l. Poetic. c. 6.*

Tragædiis nutritur; Meaning, perhaps, *Marot's* Translation of the *Psalms*. The *Sorbone* declared against them, yet were they so much in vogue at the French Court, that no person of Note, but had their favourite Psalm to their occasions. King *H. 2.* chose the 42 Psalm, *Ainsi qu' on oyt le Cerf*. Like as the Hart doth----- which he sung when a-hunting. *Madam de Valentinois*, who was in Love, took the 130. *Da fond de ma pensée*--From the bottom of my heart, which she sung *en volte*. The Queen's choice was the 6th, *Ne veuillez pas o Sire, Lord, in thy wrath* --- to an Air on the *Chant des buffons*. *Anthony King of Navarr* had the 43th, *Revenge moy, prens ta querelle*. Judge, and revenge my Cause (e), which he tun'd to the Brawl of *Poitiers*, and the rest in like manner. *Clement Marot* set their Pipes a-going in Court and Countrey. And the poor Hereticks keep it up to this day; tho' (God-wot) they now (many of them) sing their Song in a strange Land.

To be call'd Apostate; to be deny'd our Baptism, Eucharist, and Christian Burial; to be Excommunicated, and given up to the Devil by so many Fathers, Canons, and Councils; however terrible to the Ears, is

(e) *Florimond Raymond, Hist. Heres.*

not so convincing to the Understanding, as one fair Argument from Reason. What occurs of this kind is peradventure most-what comprehended in these words of *Lactantius*.

Comicae Fabulae de stupris Virginum loquuntur, aut amoribus Meretricum: Et quo (f) magis sunt eloquentes qui flagitia illa finxerunt, eo magis sententiarum elegantia persuadent. Et facilius inhaerent Audientium memoriae versus numerosi & ornati. Tragicæ Historiæ subjiciunt oculis Parricidia, & Incesta, & Cothurnata scelera demonstrant.

In Comedies, says he, are represented the debauch, and leud Pranks amongst Women of evil Conversation: And the more excellent that the Poet is, the deeper is the impression on the hearers. The Neatness and Elegance of Thought, with the Beauty and Sweetness of the Verse, run always in their mind, and will not out of their head. Tragedy lays before 'em Parricides, Incests, and Wickedness in its Pontificalibus.

This indeed is of weight, and deserves consideration. It is a standing Objection; and was a Pagan Objection above two thousand years ago.

Plato is very particular in his charge; says he, Fraud and Rapine, (g) and all

(f) *Lib. 6. Inst. Div.* (g) *l. Common. Dial. 2.*

manner

manner of violence they commend or countenance by good Presidents, and Examples of this, and t^other God, or Son of God. *Mercury* is made the Patron for stealing. And how scurvily does *Jupiter* deal with his Old Father? What piques, feuds and domestick squabbles amongst themselves? nor is their War with the Giants a more tolerable fiction. (*b*) Whatever is devised of this kind is a false fable, and a lye, and yet, were it true, not fit to be divulged to the people. (*i*) God is never to be represented whether in Songs, in Psalms, or Tragedy, otherwise than Just, Good, and Gracious. And on no account, to be said the author of Evil. When any evil is done the Cause is to be sought for elsewhere. Nor is it to be imagin'd that God had any hand in't. Therefore is it not to be endured that any Poet should as *Homer* (*k*), give out, that,

*Two Barrels in his Cellar Jove has still
Of gifts to be bestow'd on Mortal Wights,
One full of good, the other full of ill,
And usually to mingle them delights.*

Nor must be suffer'd that infraction and violation of the Oaths and Truce by (*l*) *Pan-*

(*b*) *L. of Laws, Dial. 12.* (*i*) *Commonw. ut supra.* (*k*) *Il. 2.* (*l*) *Il. 3.*

darius when done at the instigation of *Jupiter* and *Minerva*.

Nor that broyl and controverſie amongst the Gods, put to the Arbitration and De-
ciſion of *Jupiter* and *Themis*.

Nor can *Æſchylus* be allow'd to vent
any thing like that ſaying,

*Whom Jove wou'd deſtroy he takes away
their Senſes.*

Nor, if in any ſort of Poetry relation is
made of the affliction that beſel to *Niobe*,
or to the *Pelopidæ*, or to the *Trojans*; or
the like: It muſt not be ſuggeſted that this
was the work of God: but if it be; then a
reaſon is to be ſubjoyned, as that God did,
indeed, what was good and juſt, and did
chajiſe 'em, for their good. But he muſt
not ſay that puniſhment is an Affliction, and
that God afflicted them. For that would
neither be Pious, be Profitable, nor be
Conſiſtent.

Nor muſt he repreſent God diſguiſing
himſelf and putting on ſeveral ſhapes to
carry on ſome Cheat or Impoſture, nor to
be capable of any Change, Paſſion, or Per-
turbation. Nor ſay that the Gods wander
from Town to Town in the likenefſ of Stran-
gers(m). And ſuch Lies as are abroad, of *Pro-
teus* and *Thetis*. And in ſome Tragedies,

(m) *Odyſſ. 7.*

Juno

Juno turned into a Priest, gathering the benevolence of the Congregation for the Sons of *Inachus*, newly restored to life.

Nor is the lying Dream, sent by *Jupiter* to *Agamemnon* (n) by any means to be excused.

Nor *Æschylus* where he brings in *Thetis* complaining that at her Wedding *Apollo* in her *Epithalamium* sung:

*That long the Son of Thetis was to live ;
By no disease molested. That the Gods
Took of my Fortunes care and special liking ;
And gave me joy, and praises in abundance.
Cou'd my hopes fail, thus founded on Apollo,
His Mouth Divine, Fatidical, and True ?
Yet He, the same, that flatt' red me so fair,
And at my Table sat a willing guest,
He, that thus did and said, even He has slain
(my Child.*

And in *Homer*, when she cries out (o),

*Ab wretched Goddess that I was to bear
The best of all the Heroes---*

And when *Jupiter* mourns so heavily (p):

*Ab me ! my Son Sarpedon will be slain---
And for the honour of his Son so dear,
For Rain he drops of blood from Heaven sends.*

(n) Il. 2. (o) Il. Σ. (p) Il. π.

And when he laughs at *Vulcan* limping
along with a Cup of *Nectar*.

*And then the Gods laugh all at once out-right
To see the lame, and sooty Vulcan skink (q).*

Æschylus had, in *Athens*, made a great
noise with his Tragedy call'd the *Furies*:
after which *Aristophanes*, to expose the
Tragick Poets wrote a Comedy, which he
nam'd the *Frogs*: There he charges *Euri-*
pides for having brought upon the Stage,
Phædra's, *Sthenobæa's*, and the like wicked
Strumpets. Nay.

*What is he not guilty of ?
Has he not shewn you panders,
And Women bringing forth in Temples ?
And such as mix with their own Brothers ?
And those that say : Not to live is to live ?
Thus has he fill'd the Town
With Scribes, Buffoons, and Monkeys,
That banter, and make Asses of the People.*

He again twits him with his,

Τὸ οὐδέν, εἰ τοῦτο μὲν ἐστὶ καὶ δαεῖν,
τὸ πῶν δὲ δειπνῆν, καὶ τοῦ καὶ δεύειν καὶ ἰόν ;

(q) H. æ.

Who

*Who can tell but that to live is to dye,
To drink is to think, and to sleep, a wooll sack.*

This second line is added to ridicule the former, and for this sentence he taxes *Euripides* as teaching *Scepticism*; And everywhere is playing upon that,
*My Tongue did Swear, my Mind was never
Sworn.*

As if thereby *Euripides* opened a door to Evasion and Perjury.

Thus we see how well *Aristophanes*, and *Plato* agree with *Lactantius*; and charge upon Tragedy the same enormities, Incests, and *Corburnata scelera*, and also the odd unlucky sayings that stick in our memory, and will not out of a body's head.

When King *Archelaus* asked *Plato* what book he might read to learn the state of Affairs and Government in *Athens*, *Plato* bid him only to read *Aristophanes*; 'tis likely that we may better trust him for the *State of Poetry* in his time. And we may be confident he would mince nothing, out of any favour or affection, being a professed Enemy to *Euripides*.

Upon a presumption then that nothing more can be rais'd to bear against this sort of Poetry; we may proceed to offer something in answer to those objections. CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

Aristotle's general Answer evasive. Plato a better Divine. Not better than our Modern. God may use ill instruments. The false Dream. The two Barrels. Fables before Homer. He of God sensibly. Plato, Cant. Metaphore the utmost we are capable of. Fables. Allegory. Celsus to Origen against the Bible. Allegory, a cure for all. Homers Fables from the Bible. The false Dream, from the Story of Achab improv'd by Homer. Averroes of Arabian Poets. Apollo Loxias. Particular sentences. Texts of Scripture. Juno, Job's Wife. SS. in Vulgar Tongue. Euripides, ill Women. No blame to the art. Pomp of the Theatre. What ill names by Jesuits.

FOR every Cavil, against any thing devised by the Poets, in relation to the Gods, (*) *Aristotle* proposes one general answer, That a Critick need not be so fierce and positive to quarrel on that account, where all are in the dark, that nei-

(*) *Poetica.*

ther

ther Critick nor Poet know ought of the matter. We may grant that this answer is evasive ; And may allow that *Aristotle* might not be so great a Divine as *Plato* ; yet, doubtless our Modern Divines are a match for *Plato* : And have the better end of the Staff in this controversie. Who all hold with *Homer* and the old Poets that God may to good ends and purposes, make use of evil means, and instruments.

And thus was *Pandarus* employ'd by *Jove* and *Pallas* to break the Peace. And the lying Dream sent to cheat *Agamemnon*.

--- *A Dream he call'd, false Dream, said he,
Go, bye to Agamemnons Tent, and say,
Distinctly, as you bidden are by me.
Bid him bring up his Army now to Troy,
For now the time is come, he shall it take.*

Objections of this kind make no difficulty now-adays, with the most Orthodox: nor do the *two Barrels in Jove's Cellar*, make any ill sound : we know with what Heifer they have plowed ; and see the Original of all the Greek Mythology ; their Gods, and Heroes.

Not to represent their Gods with face, and fingers, with actions, and passions, and other

other Modifications, after the fashions of men, were to say nothing. *St. Paul* that soared as high as any body, and had the gift of Tongues, declares the things above *ineffable*. *Homer* knew this; therefore would not *banter* the World with hard words, and unintelligible gibberish, as *Plato* and others have since done; but did accommodate his Speech to our Human Senses, by Metaphors, Similitudes, Tropes, and Parables; after the manner of *Moses*, and the Old Prophets before him. He entertains and fills us to the utmost of our Organs and Capacity. Something he finds for all our Senses. He brings them to our Eyes, our Ears, our Touch: *Nectar* he provides for our Taste, and there always exhales an Ambrosial Odour in the Divine Presence. What *Plato*, or an Angel would say further, passes all understanding, would not enter our Organs; could have no relish or proportion to affect us, more than the Musick of the Spheres. Metaphor must be the Language, when we travel in a Countrey beyond our Senses.

The wisest part of the World were always taken with *Fables*, as the most delightful means to convey Instruction, and leave the strongest Impression on our Mind.

Mind. They in the (a) *East* will not be perswaded that the *Fables*, with us, under the name of *Æsop*, were other than of their Countrey growth : And *Lockman* they avouch to be the Author of them.

The Old Prophets could devise nothing higher for the future *Messiah*, than that every thing he should say would be a *Parable*.

As for the *Fables* which in *Homer*, or on the Stage give offence : The Antients had a thing call'd an *Allegory*, which went a great way towards stopping the mouth of many a pert *Observer*.

We see the word in the Apostle *St. Paul*, (b) and the application of it, which *St. Origen* was glad to find, when *Celsus* call'd him to account for the *Old Testament*; so many odd Tales, *Eve with the Serpent*, *Cain and Abel*: the building of *Babel*, *Sodom*, with *Lot and his Daughters*, (c) *Parricidia*, & *Incesta*, & *Cothurnata scelera*, far beyond any thing fabled in *Tragedies* of *Thyestes*: *Δυσέτιον γὰρ αὐτομωρεῖα*. Shall we *Christians* only, says he, be denied the benefit of this *Allegory*? May not we be allowed our *Mystery*, and *Tropological* meaning?

So we see what *Lactantius* objected against *Homer*, and the *Heathen Tragedies*, is by

(a) *Huet* on *Romance*. (b) *Galat.* c. 4. (c) *Origen* against *Celsus*, l. 4.

the Heathens objected against our *Bible*, and Religion.

But we need not be so angry on either hand. Find but out the *Allegory*, and we are all to-rights again.

Besides, it is now no secret, that *Homer* had most of his *Fables* from some Hebrew Tradition or Original. (d) *Clement of Alexandria*, and *Eusebius* made the discovery long ago.

So the lying *Dream* (e) sent by *Jupiter* to *Agamemnon*, which *Plato* was so much offended at, is a Poetical Improvement from the Story of *Achab*. What pretty turn and dress he sets it off in, to bend and fashion it into one piece with his Song; and to accommodate it the better to our Ears in a more Philosophical Climate?

Averroes, after his Comment on the *Pœtica*, allows that *Aristotles* Rules do not much concern the Arabian Poets; *What then*, says he, *shall we conclude that he wrote not Rules for the Arabians? God forbid! Aristotle wrote Nature; he wrote for all Human kind.*

But the *Arabian* Fancies always are on the gallop: They are not to march in rank and file, nor be subject to our *European* Discipline. *Homer* understood their

(d) *Strom. Pr. Evang.* (e) *Il. l. 2. Commen. Dia. 2.*

Spirit, and could make the best out : He knew how to manage the fiery *Arab*, and bring the wildest *Asiatick* to his hand.

Æschylus is not to be blamed, when he tells of *Apollo* singing at a Wedding, that much happiness should ensue thereupon; and the Child should live long. *Apollo* before then had the Epithete of *Loxias*, from his double meaning; to shew the Nature of Oracles. Be not out of patience, *Thetis*, thy Child shall live, his memory, his better part. *Homer* has ensur'd it for *Achilles*, to the end of the World.

If then the Fables heretofore employed for the *Drama*, are not so hastily to be censured; no body, I conceive, will stick with us for the particular sayings, as before mention'd to be objected by *Aristophanes*, *Plato*, and *Lactantius*.

For their good sayings, we have *St. Paul* citing a whole Verse out of a Comedy of *Menander*. *St. Clemens* of *Alexandria* brings more proofs for Christianity from *Menander* and other Comedies, than from all the Bible, or any other Topick.

On the other hand, where ill men are represented, we must not take it amiss that they say ill things. *Dolus an Virtus, quis in hoste requirit?* When we remember the saying, we remember it the saying of a Rogue;

Rogue; of *Sinon*, as notorious amongst his Companions, as was *Judas* amongst the Apostles.

Flectere si nequeo superos, Acheronta movebo.

This by every body is allowed to be a very wicked saying. But why may not *Juno* sometimes take as much liberty of her Tongue, as *Job's Wife*, or any other Old-Testament Matron? There is no question but we find more abuse of the sayings in holy Scripture, and the consequence more Tragical, than from any perverted Text in Poetry. *Curse ye Meroz*, serves any bodies purpose, that would be cutting Throats. *Campanella* and *Pedro de Guzman* would urge as much against the S.S. in our Mother Tongue, on this account, as against this *Nurse of Heresie*, this *Hydra's Head* of Dramatick representations.

If there be any eye and inspection on the Pulpits, that they be kept to decency and Rule; May not the King and Queens Theatre deserve the like care, and have its Committee of Lay-Bishops to see that no Doctrine be there broached, but what tends to the Edification, at well as to the Delight of the Spectators.

If *Euripides* brought on the Stage Harlots

lots (f) *Æschylus* shew'd none; nor any Woman that might be so much as suspected to be in Love. What was an error in one, is not to be charged on the rest; nor a Reflection on the Art. Indeed, when the Art is abused, one may with *Tully* cry out, *O præclaræ Morum Emendatricem Poeticam!* But the same Irony is as applicable to the Pulpit, as to the Stage.

Grant there, in a Tragedy, the felicity of the Invention, the novelty of the Fictions, the strength of Verse, the easiness of Expression, the solid Reason, the warmth of Passion, still heightened and rising from Act to Act; together with the richness of Figures, the pomp of the Theatre, the habits, gesture and voice of the Actors, at the same instant charming both the Eyes and the Ears; so the Senses being won, the Judgment is surpris'd, and the whole Man at once led captive: A body must be of Brass or Stone to resist so many Charms, and be Master of himself amidst so much allurements and temptation.

Grant all this, I say, where is the hurt? what is the danger? If *the End* of all is to shew *Virtue in Triumph*. The noblest thoughts make the strongest impression; and the juster passions find the kindest re-

ception amongst us. The Medicine is not less wholesom, for the Honey, or the gilded Pill. Nor can a Moral Lesion be less profitable, when dressed and set off with all the advantage and decoration of the Theatre.

This is, indeed, of all diversions the most bewitching; and the Theatre is a Magazine, not to be trusted, but under the special eye and direction of a Virtuous Government, otherwise, according to the course of the World, it might, possibly, degenerate; to deserve the Aspersions, and ill names, whereby the Jesuits would render it odious, calling it the *School of Vice*, the *Sanctuary of Venus*, the *Temple of Impiety*, the *Furnace of Babylon*, the *Consistory of Impurity*, the *Shop of Leudness*, the *Pest of Common-wealths*, the *Seminary of Debauchery*, *Satan's Festival*, and the *Devil's Dancing-School*.

CHAP. V.

Of Poetry in Italy. Aristotle's Works. Tramon-
tains. Cardinal Bibiena. Tragedy there with
Chorus. Strolers. Christ's Passion.

Of Poetry in France. Clem. Marot. Strolers
there. Proceedings at Law against them. Re-
port of their Case. Their Old Testament. Acts
of the Apostles, and Christ's Passion. Banish'd
from France. Comedy there. Tragedy by Hardy,
Corneille, Richilieu. Academy Royal. The
Theatre. Caution that no Equivoque, nor
ought against good Manners. More nice than the
Pulpit. Their Gallantry, Verse, Language, unfit
for Tragedy. Dramatick representations banish'd
from Spain. Nurse of Herefie. Father Guz-
man. Escobar.

Of Poetry in England. British, Saxon, Norman,
Latin and Provencial Poetry here. Richard
Cœur de Lion, a Provencial Poet. Our Monks
and History false on that account. The Gay
Science. That and the Albigenfes contempo-
rany, and from the same Countrey. King
Richard's Fellow-Poets. Jeffry Rudel, and
Countess of Tripoly.

IN the beginning of the last Century,
 when People began to open their Eyes,
 and look farther into the Matters of Reli-
 gion and good Litterature, *Italy* had much
 the start and advantage from the rest of

Europe, thither were *Aristotle's Works* first brought a-shoar; and there were they translated, conn'd, and commented by the chiefest Wits amongst them. And above all, his *Poetica* engag'd their utmost care and application.

So many Comments had they made, and so many Critical Observations, before, on this side the *Alps*, any thing, in that way, was understood, that they began to lay it down for a truth, that the *Tramontans* had no gusto. *Oltramontani*, says one of them, *Non sono zelanti delle buone regole de Greci, & de Latini. They make no Conscience of breaking the good Laws of the Greeks and Latins.*

Others undertook to put in practice, and write by his Principles and Direction. *Biliena* (afterwards a Cardinal) first try'd his Talent on a Comedy; and was followed by *Acioſto*, *Piccolomini*, *Machiavel*, and many others, who took *Plautus* and *Terence* for their Patterns.

Trissino, *Ruscalli*, *Cinthio*, *Taſſo*, with many more, wrote Tragedies in blank Verse, with the *Chorus*. and every thing to the best of their power, after the Athenian Models.

But *Italy* had no Fund for the vast charge of Dramatick representations; they had no standing

standing Revenue for the Theatre ; and however magnificent some Prince might be on an extraordinary Wedding or great occasion ; there was nothing constant, nor could it, in such circumstances, be expected, that the *Drama* there should turn to account, or rise to any tolerable reputation. Therefore the ordinary business of the Stage was left amongst a company of *Strolers*, who wandred up and down, acting Farce, or turning into Farce, whatever they acted.

* *Castelvetro* tells us, that even at *Rome*, in his time, *Christ's Passion* was so acted by them, as to set all the Audience a-laughing.

Francis the first, by whose Encouragement Letters had begun to flourish in *France*, and Poetry more particularly, by the means of *Clement Marot* (who then translated the *Psalms*, and sent abroad his *Balades*, which *Campanella* reckons to have ushered in the *Hereſie*) King *Francis*, I say, was much delighted, for want of better, with these *Strolers*. At the latter end of his Reign we find a *Cause* of the *Strolers* notably pleaded and debated amongst their Lawyers and the King's Counsel.

The Charge against them extracted from the Parliament Rolls, *Anno* 1541.

That They, 2 or 3 years ago, had under-

(*) *Pœtica.*

taken to represent Christ's Passion, and the Acts of the Apostles; and therein had employed mean illiterate fellows, who were not cunning in those matters, as a Carpenter, a Bum-Bailiff, a Weaver, and others, who had committed divers faults, both in the Fiction, and in their Action. And to lengthen out the time, had interlarded many Apocryphal Matters, not contained in the Acts of the Apostles, that their Play might last three or four days longer; thereby to get the more Money from the People. Adding, moreover at the beginning, or at the end, Drolls, and wanton Farces, and by that means had made it hold out for six or seven months together: By means whereof the Divine Service was neglected, no body went to Church, Charity grew cold; besides all the Adulteries, Fornications, Mockeries, and Derisions unexpressible.

More especially, in the first place, on Holy-days, from eight or nine a Clock a-mornings, the People left their Parish-Mass, Sermon, and Vespers, to take their place at the Play house; and staid there till five in the Afternoon. So that Preaching was left off, the Preachers finding no body to hear them.

And the People, as they came back from the Play house, would publickly and loudly mock at the Plays and Actors, repeating some words they had heard knockt out of joynt, at the Play;
or

or some part ill acted, saying in derision, The Holy Ghost was loth to come down, and the like.

And generally the Parsons of the Parishes, to have their pastime at the Plays, have left off the Afternoon Prayers on Holy-days: Or have said them alone by themselves at Noon, an hour not usual, nor Canonical. And even the King's Chaplains, in the Chappel of the Household, whilst the Plays lasted, have on Holy-days, said the Evening-Prayers at Noon: And besides, ran them off post-haste, to be gone to the Play-house: A thing undecent, unusual, of evil example, and contrary to the holy Councils of the Church, namely, the Council of Carthage, where it is said, *Qui die solemnī pratermissō Ecclesiæ conventu ad spectacula vadit, excommunicetur.*

2. Preaching is more decent for the Instruction of the People (provided 'tis done by Theologians, men of Learning and Knowledge) than are the Plays, made by those that are ignorant and illiterate; who neither know what they speak, nor what they act; representing the Acts of the Apostles, the Old Testament, and the like Histories which they pretend to Act.

3. It is plain by Natural Reason, that without first knowing the Truth, one cannot make a Fiction; for Fiction is to be something as near the Truth as may be; whereas neither

the Masters, nor the Actors know the A B C. They understand neither the Bible, nor any prophane Learning, being Mechanicks, as Gobblers, Botchers, Porters, that can neither read nor write, nor have been train'd to the Stage, or that sort of exercise: Neither is their Tongue well hung, nor have they proper Language, nor can they accent the words, or give them a decent pronunciation: Nor do they know at all what they are about, or what it is they say; so that sometimes they chop one word into three, step in the middle of a sentence, making it a question, which is a sentence of Admiration; accenting and pronouncing with their gesture every thing Kim Kam, quite contrary; causing a laughter, and booting in the Play-house, that instead of turning to Edification, there is nothing but scandal and derision.

4. *The Farces and wanton Interludes which they mix with the Mysteries Ecclesiastical, make it a thing forbidden by all the Councils, as the Doctors all agree.*

5. *It is visible that what they do is for Lucre only; as they would do with a Tavern, or Trade: And they raise the price, which the first year was twenty and twenty five Crowns, the next thirty and thirty six Crowns, and is this present year forty and fifty Crowns of the Sun, for every Box.*

6. *Great*

6. Great mischief, by Assignations, under colour of going to the Plays, Adulteries, &c.

7. The Plays occasion Junketing and expences extraordinary, amongst the common people; so that which a Handy-crafty-man has earn'd in a week, shall be all spent in one day, at the Plays, and the Junketing and Drunkenness, whereby his Wife and poor Children suffer all the week.

8. Charity so much impaired, that within the six weeks that the Plays have continued, the Alms are lessen'd 3000 Livres.

Notwithstanding all which, one Royer, a Fish-seller, a Carpenter, a Cobler, and others their Companions have a-new for this next year undertaken to have acted the Old Testament, and set a price for hereafter to get money from the people.

Of all which, the King's Attorney General being informed, hath put a stop to their farther proceedings. They shew a Letter of Priviledge they had obtained from the King.

By the Letters it appears, they had suggested to the King, that what they did was out of pure Zeal and Devotion, and for the Edification of the People, which is false; and besides, their quality and circumstances speak the contrary; and what they do is barely a Trade for gain. Moreover, in the Old Testament we many things not so proper to be declared to the People,

People, weak and simple, that may be drawn in to turn Jews for want of understanding.

For these considerations a stop is put to their Acting of the Old Testament till the good pleasure, will and intention of the King, when inform'd of those matters, shall be known.

The said Attorney General also presented another Complaint against the former Company, that they might put into the Poors Box, out of their Profits, for their representing the Acts of the Apostles, eight hundred Livres till farther order; the like against the Company that acted Christ's Passion.

The Council for the Strolers saith, He comes not to answer the Charge against them that show the Acts of the Apostles; but for the new Company only of the Mystery, for the Old Testament. And true it is, that the King two years since having sometimes seen them Act the Mystery of the Passion; and by the account then made him, how well they played the Acts of the Apostles; and that it was worth his while also to see the Representation of the Old Testament, Royer above-named, being then present, did promise the King to get the Old Testament Acted. And thereupon the King gave leave to the said Royer, to have the Representation of the Old Testament; and granted him Letters Patents accordingly.

This

. This Record, abridg'd here, in the translation, giving so particular an History of the Stage in those days, is added at length in the Original, at the end of the Book.

King *Francis* liv'd about five or six years after. And then were the Comedians both *French* and *Italians*, all packt off, and banished the Kingdom.

In 1597. *Peter l' Ariveu* published Comedies, written, as he tells us, in imitation of the Antient Greeks, *Latins*, and Modern *Italians*. And the end he propos'd was according to *Horace*,

Quelque profit, & contentement ensemble.

After him *Alexander Hardy* attempted Tragedy, whose works were published ann. 1625 Not long after succeeded the famous *Corneille*, who began to write for the Stage, after *Hardy's* Model.

And now, if the *French* Theatre did not rise to equal the glory of the *Romans*, and Antient *Greeks*, it was not for want of Encouragement from the Government. Cardinal *Richelieu*, who had the power in his hand, did heartily and generously perform his part. He founded the *Academy Royal*, and more especially provided for the Theatre.

Yet

Yet with this Caution, (a) never to represent *Aucunes actions Malhonneſtes*, ny d'uſer d'*aucunes paroles laſcives*, ny a double entente, qui puiſſent bleſſer l'honneſteté publique. And we find the Poets ſtand corrected, and do penance if they chance to offend againſt this declaration. The liberty de l'*equivoque*, nor any *idée vilaine* will there eſcape cenſure, even by the Audience. So the *Theodore* by *Corneille*, wou'd not take. No other reaſon could be deviſed by the Author, but the meer concept of her Proſtitution, which was odious to the imagination. And He rightly obſerves from thence, that our Theatres are much more delicate on thoſe occaſions, than were the Antient Fathers, or the Pulpits. Says he; *However 'tis ſome ſatisfaction to me that I ſee the better and more ſound part of my Judges impute this ill ſucceſs to that imagination of a Proſtitutor, which one could not endure; tho' 'twas well known, it would not take effect: And that to allay the horror of it, I made uſe of all the helps that art and experience could furniſh me withall. Amidſt this diſgrace, I rejoice to ſee the purity of our Stage, to find that an hiſtory, the faireſt Ornament of the ſecond book of St. Ambroſ's Virgins, appears too licentious to paſs on our*

(a) *Lew. 13. Decl. 1641.*

Stage,

Stage. What might have been said, if, like that great Doctor of the Church, I had shown the Virgin in that infamous place, if I had described the various agitations of her mind, whilst she was in the place, if I had drawn the troubles she felt that instant she saw (her lover) Didymus come in to her; 'tis on this occasion that this great Saint makes Triumph that Eloquence which Converted St. Austin, it is for this spectacle, that He particularly invites the Virgins to open their eyes.

I kept her from the sight, And so much as I could, from the imagination of my Audience. Yet after all my industry, the modesty of our Theatre is such, to dislike that little, which the necessity of my subject, forced me to make known.

In points of decency the French are certainly very delicate, and commendable. The noble encouragement they met withal, and their singular application have carried them very far in the improvement of the *Drama*. Nor were the Audience to be taxed for the hasty applause, they have often given to Plays of no great merit. It has been so in all Nations.

As, in Pictures, A man who had never seen such a thing before, would find his amusement, and be in admiration at every Sign-post, or *Saracens head* that he Travels
by

by. The first Plays of *Corneille* were better, that is, more regular, than any before him, the Audience had never seen the like. Judgment runs, most-what by comparison: by Purple we Judge of Purple.

They now see the difference betwixt his first Essays, and the Plays composed in his riper years.

After all it is observ'd how much, that Wild-goose-chase of Romance runs still in their head, some Scenes of Love must every where be thuffled in, tho' never so unseasonable.

The Grecians were for Love and Musick as mad as any Monsieur of 'emall; yet their Musick kept within bounds; attempted no Metamorphosis to turn the *Drama* to an *Opera*. Nor did their Love come whining on the Stage to Effeminate the Majesty of their Tragedy. It was not any love for *Briseis* that made *Achilles* so wroth; it was the affront, in taking his booty from him, in the face of the Confederate Army. This, his Stomach cou'd not digest.

--- *nec gravem*

Peleidæ stomachum cedere Nescij. Hor.

One, with the Genius of *Miguel Cervante*, might, doubtlets, find matter for as good
a Sa-

a Satyr, from the French Gallantry, as He had done from the Spanish Chivalry.

Another objection, is their writing Plays in Ryme.

The *Hexameter* wou'd not pass in Greek or Latin Tragedy, for the language is to be *Agissante*, active. They reckon'd the *Jambick* to be the verse for business.

-- *Natum rebus agendis.* Hor.

The French seem the remotest in the World from this sort of Turn. Our Ear shou'd not be hankering after the Ryme, when the business should wholly take us up, and fill our Head. The words must be all free, independant, and disengag'd, no entanglement of Ryme to be in our way. We must clear the Decks, and down with the Ornaments and Trappings in the day of Action, and Engagement.

But they are not only fetter'd with Ryme, but their verse is the long *Alexandrin*, of twelve syllables: with a stop, or pause always in the middle.

As if a Latin Tragedy were written all in *Pentameters*. To the Tune of,

Hei mihi quod domino, non licet ire tuo;

Or, {

Or, with us, to the Air of *Hopkins* and *Sternold*.

Of sing unto the Lord, a new and joyful song.

A Man shou'd not trust his own Ear to Judge a forreign language by, but their own best authors are sensible of this halt in their verie, and complain of that *Cesure* and perpetual *Monotomy*, as they call it.

In their language it self wants strength and sinews, is too feeble for the Weight and Majesty of Tragedy. We see their Consonants spread on Paper, but they stick in the Hedge; they pass not their Teeth in their Pronunciation.

From *Spain* little observable can be expected in relation to Dramatick Poetry; Since *Campanella* had assur'd them that it is *the Nurse of Heresie*.

So Father *Guzman* informs us that his Catholick Majesty, *Phil. II.* (b) towards the end of his life, (when his Wisdom was *ex su punto*, on the prick of perfection, old age being *la salsa de la sabiduria*, seeing neither *medio*, o *remedio* to reform them) did quite banish them the Country.

Then another Jesuit lets us to know how religiously the truly Catholick, *Phil. IV.*

(b) *Disc. 6. 1. 8.*

this

this very year 1646. hath packt them awa
as the common Plague from out the King
doms of *Spain*, by his Royal Ediſt.

Quam pie Phil, IV. vere Catholicus Co-
mædias ab Hispaniæ regnũ, hoc Anno 1646.
ut Communem pestem regio ablegarit Ediſto,
Eſcobar. Mor. Theol. So we ſee this Nurse
of *Hereſie*, this Head of the Pagan Hydra,
is like to have no footing within the Catho-
lick Majeſties Dominions. The *Inquiſition*
and the *Muſes* muſt not ſet their Horſes
together.

Since the decay of the Roman Empire
this Iſland; peradventure has been more
fortunate in matters of Poetry, than any
of our Neighbours. Notwithſtanding the
preſent flouriſh and oſtentation of the French
Theatre: Our Wit might have made us the
better Poets: tho' our honeſty make us
worſe *Politicians*. We find of the *Britiſh*
Poetry to this day. One of our oldeſt
Medals bears an Harp on the Reverse, with
the Name *Kunobeline* around it.

The Germans have often printed with
Plantus a Comedy call'd *Querolus*; which
no body now queſtions, but that it was
written by *Gildas*, who lived *Anno. 493.*

After him *Thalieſſin*, and *Merlin*, and
others, had they not written in *Welch*,
might yet deſerve an eſteem amongſt u.

Our *Saxon* Kings have their Grants, and Charters in *Ryme*, yet upon *Récord*.

The first *William* came, singing *Roland*, to fight that decisive Battel, which wan him England. *Rolandi cantu inchoato, ut bellatorum animos accenderet, prælium Commiserunt*. As *Mat. Paris*, *Mat. Westminster*, *Will. Malm.bury*, *Knighton*, and the rest inform us.

And indeed, to write in *Latin* the World had not the like to our Poets of that Century *Joseph of Exeter*, wrote so much above the Age, that he was well-nigh lost from us; his Poem of the *Trojan War*, going a long time currant in Print for a *Classick*, under the name of *Cornelius Nepos*. He brings us to *King R. I.* with whom, and with *Baldwyn* Archbishop of *Canterbury*, He went to the *Holy War*.

This King, *Richard Ceur de lion*, and his Brother *Jeffrey* had formerly liv'd much in the Courts of several Princes, in and about *Provence*, so came to take delight in their Language, their Poetry (then call'd the *Gay Science*) and their Poets; which began not long before his time, to be in great vogue in the World.

The Italian (c) Authors acknowledge that the best part of their Language, and

(c) *Bembo. Speron Sperone, &c.*

of

of their Poetry is drawn from that of *Provence*, as, indeed, is also that of the Spanish, and other Modern Languages. It is certain that *Petrarch* (the Poet that the Italians brag most on to this day) would show very empty, If the *Provencial* Poets had from him, all their own again. And, in truth, all our *Modern* Poetry comes from them.

Never was known that application, both in the Princes and People, as at that time every where to the *Provencial* Poetry, which gave one of (*d*) their Romancers the fancy that *Charlemain* made a *Donation* of *Provence*, to be the *Poets Patrimony*.

I should not be so large on this occasion but to antidote against an impression, our *Monks* of that time might otherwise make upon us. As, amongst the rest, *Roger Hoveden* tells, that this King *Richard*, to raise himself a name, went about begging and buying verses and flattering Rymes; And by rewards enticed over from France Singers and Jesters, to sing of him in the Streets. And it was every where given out, that there was not the like of him, in the World again. *Hic ad augmentum & famam sui Nominis, emendicata carmina, & rithmos adulatorios comparabat, & de regno*

(*d*) *Phil. de Monsky.*

Francorum Cantores & Joculatores allegerat ut de illo canerent in Plateis, & dicebatur ubique quod non erat talis in orbe.

That these *Songsters* and *Jesters* were brought from *France* is most false. *France* had no pretensions thereabouts in those days. Those Countreys were *Fiefs* of the Empire. *Frederick I.* had *Enfeoffed* *Ramond Berenger* of the County of *Provence*, *Torcalquiers*, and places adjacent, as not long after *Frederick II.* install'd *William au courb nez*, Prince of *Orange*, King of *Arles* and *Viennes*: which family had formerly posses'd *Provence*. As truly, he might have said, they were brought from *Spain*: for *Ildefonso* King of *Arragon*, Count of *Provence*, *Barcelona*, &c. had given and settled on his Son this County of *Provence*. It may be noted that about the same time that the *Provencial* Poetry did flourish, did also spring up that *Heresy* of the *Albigenses* that so much alarm'd the Popish World, and cost so many *Crusades* to suppress them. *Ramond* Count of *Tholouse* was the Protector of the *Albigenses*, and was also a principal *Patron* of these Poets. *Guithem* of *Agault*, *Albert* of *Sisteron*, *Rambald* of *Orange* (names now reviv'd by the Duke of *Savoy*) and the like, were *Provencial* Poets; All the Princes that were in league

league together to support the *Albigenses* against *France* and the Pope, did encourage and patronize these Poets, amongst the rest a King of *Arragon* lost his life in the quarrel, at a Battel where *Simon Monfort* did command as chief of the *Crusade*.

From hence we may gather why the Monks were so angry at these *Singers* and *Jesters*. And did not like that the King should be so familiar with them.

One of them with King *Richard* was *Anselm Faydet*, of whom *Petrarch*.

--- *Anselmo*

È mille altri ne vidi : a cui la lingua
Lancia È spada fu sempre, È scudo È elmo

*I saw, with many others, Anselm there,
Whose tongue was shield and helmet, sword
(and spear.*

This *Anselm* was wont to write *Comedies*, and *Tragedies*; which in his own Country he could sell for 2. or 3000 *livres Turnois*; and some for more: And had several acted at his own charge. After King *Richards* death, he married a Nun, a Dame of quality, out of a Nunnery at *Aix*. And after went to live with the Marquess of *Monferrat*, who took part with the Count of *Tholouse*: And to him *Anselm* ventur'd to

show a *Comedy*; which till then he had kept secret from every body: and there had it acted.

In one of his Poems he describes the Palace of *Love*, his Court, his State, his Power, which *Petrarch* chang'd, and fashion'd to his mind; and calls it, in his Book. *il trionfo di amore*.

Another of these *Jesters* was *Fouchet* of *Marzeilles*, who upon the death of King *Richard*, went home, turn'd Monk, and rose to be Archbishop of *Tholouse*. *Dante* has him in his *Paradise*, and *Petrarch* of him thus

*Folchetto: ch'a Marsilia il nome ha dato,
& a Genova tolto: & al' estremo
Cangio, per miglior patria, habito & stato.*

Another of these (with *Jeffrey King Richard's* Brother) was *Jeffrey Rudel*, of whom *Petrarch*,

*Gianfre Rudel, ch' uso la vela e'l remo
A cercar la sua morte---*

Whilst this Poet was with our Prince *Jeffrey*, he was told, by Pilgrims that came from the *Holy Land*, so many fine things of the Countess of *Tripoly*, that he could stay no longer. He

He puts on a Pilgrims Weeds, takes a Voyage to *Tripoly*, fell sick by the way, and ere he came a-shore was almost dead. The *Countess* inform'd of this *Errantry*, went to the Ship, took him by the hand. He opened his Eyes, said, *Having seen her, he was satisfied*; so departed this life.

She made for him a most splendid Funeral, provided him a Tomb of Porphyry, and his Epitaph in Arabick Verse: And had his Sonnets all curiously copied over, and illumin'd, with Letters of Gold; was taken with Melancholy, and turned Nun: One of the *Songs* made in his Voyage, was this:

*Trat, & dolent m'en partray
s'yeu non vey est' amour de luench.
e non say qu' ouras la veyray,
car son trop nostras terras luench.
Dieu que fes tout quant veu, e vay :
e form' á quest' amour de luench,
my don poder al cor, car bay
esper vezer l' amour de luench.
Segnour, tenes my per veray,
l' amour qu' ay vers ella de luench.
car per un ben que m'en eschai
ba mille mals tant soy de luench.
Ja d'autre amour non janziray
s'yeu nen jau dest' amour de luench.*

*q'una plus bella non en sa
en luec que sia, ny pres, ny luench,*

*Sad and heavy should I part,
but for this Love so far away;
not knowing what my ways may thwart,
my Native Land so far away.*

*Thou that of all things Maker art,
and form'st this Love so far away;
give body's strength, then shan't I start,
from seeing her so far away.*

*How true a Love to pure desert,
my Love to her so far away!
eas'd once, a thousand times I smart,
whilst, ah! she is so far away.*

*None other Love, none other Dart
I feel, but hers so far away,
but fairer never touch'd an heart,
than hers that is so far away.*

CHAP. VII.

Savery de Mauleon a Provencial Poet. *Testimony of him. King R.I. His Verses when Prisoner in Austria. The Emperor Frederick Barbarossa. His Poetry. Ramond Beringhier. Four Daughters, four Queens. Rob. Grossthead. His Provencial Poetry. Other Languages stubborn. Chaucer refin'd our English. Which in perfection by Waller. His Poem on the Navy Royal, beyond all Modern Poetry in any Language. Before him our Poets better expressed their thoughts in Latin. Whence Hoveden might mistake, and his Malice. A Translation from Grossthead. The Harp a Musick then in fashion. Five Tragedies from Joan Queen of Naples. Forreigners all call'd French. Plays by the Parish-Clerks of London. What under H. VIII. flourish under Queen Elizabeth. The Gorboduck. French much behind-hand with us. Tragedy, with us, but a shadow.*

Savery de Mauleon, mentioned in our English Histories, is reckoned another of these Provencial Poets; of him an old * Bard, amongst them, gave this Testimony :

*Doussament fait motz & sos
ab amor que m'a vencut.*

(*) Guilhem Briton, MSS. with Signior Redi.

Sweetly

*Sweetly could he say and sing
of Love, that me hath vanquished.*

And the same Author says of King
Richard,

*Coblas a teira faire adroitement
pou vos oillez enten dompna gentilz.*

*Stanza's he trimly could invent,
upon the Eyes of Lady gent.*

One Stanza, of a Song made by him,
when a Prisoner in *Austria*, may serve for
a taste.

*Or sachan ben mos homes, e mos Barons,
Anglez, Normans, Peytauns, e Gascons ;
qu'yeunon ay ja si paure Compagnon,
que per aver lou laïsses' en prison.*

*Know ye, my Men, my Barons all,
In England, and in Normandy,
In Poicters, and in Gascony,
I no Companion held so small,
To let him thus in durance lie.*

Our King *Richard* had not the Expedient
of the French King *St. Lewis*, who, taken Pri-
soner by the *Sarazens*, pawn'd the Eucharist,
body

body for body, to the Infidels for his Ransom.

Signior *Redi*, now with the great Duke of *Tuscany*, tells us the Mss. with King *Richard's* Poetry (*), and many other of the Provençal Poets are in his keeping.

This of the Emperor *Frederick I.* is current every where.

*Plas my Cavallier Francez,
e la donna Catalana,
e l'ourar Gynoez,
e la Cour de Kastellana,
lou Kantar Provensales,
e la dansa Trivyzana,
e la corps Arrogoniez
e la perla Julliana,
les mans e Kara d'Angles,
e lou donzel de Thuscana.*

*I like in France the Chivalry,
The Catalonian Lads for me,
The Genoes for working well,
But for a Court commend Castile.
For Song, no Countrey to Provance,
And Treves must carry't for a dance.
The finest shapes in Arragon,
In Juliers they speak in Tune.
The English for an hand and face,
For Boys, troth, Tuscany's the place.*

(*) *Redi* Dishyrambick.

They

They who have written the lives of the Provencial Poets, with King *Richard*, and the Emperor *Frederick Barbarossa*, give us also the life of *Ramond* Count of *Provence*, memorable for his four Daughters, married to so many Kings. *Margaret*, to *Lewis* King of *France*. *Elionor* to our *H. III. Sance*, to *Richard* King of the Romans, *Beatrice* to *Charles* King of *Naples* and *Sicily*. On this occasion, thus *Dante*.

*Quattro figlie hebbe, & Ciascuna reina
Ramondo Beringhieri---*

*Four lovely Daughters, each of them a Queen,
Had Ramond Beringher.---*

Neither were the Churchmen all of the same Kidney with the Monks : as may be gather'd from the famous Bishop of *Lincoln Rob. Grossthead*; the most eminent in his time for Piety and Learning, and the Man of greatest Authority, who when living made the old Gentleman in *St. Peters* Chair tremble, and the bare Ghost of him, afterwards so thumt off the Pope, that he died of the contusion. He compos'd several treatises in this Provencial Ryme and Language. One of them, in *Bodleys* Library, bears this title :

Tractatus

*Tractatus in lingua Romana secundum Dom.
Rob. Grosseteste Lincoln Ep. de Principio
Creationis Mundi.*

The beginning is this :

*Ki pense ben, ben peut dire :
Sanz penser ne poet soffire
De nul bon oure Comencer
Deu nos doint de li penser
De ki, par ki, en ki sont
Toz les bens ki font el mond.*

*He that thinks well, well can say :
Without thinking, nought he may :
Not a good work once begin.
God wou'd have us think of him :
From whom, by whom, in whom are all
The good things which the World we call.*

This *Provencial* was the first, of the modern languages, that yielded and chim'd in with the musick and sweetness of ryme ; which making its way by *Savoy* to *Monferat* ; The *Italians* thence began to file their *volgare* ; And to set their verses all after the Chimes of *Provence*. Our Inter-marriages, and our Dominions thereabouts, brought us much sooner acquainted with their

their Tongue and Poetry ? And they, with us, that would write verse, as King *Richard*, *Savery de Mauleon*, and *Rob. Grosstead*, finding the English stubborn and unweildy, fell readily to that of *Provence*, as more glib, and lighter on the Tongue. But they who attempted verse in English, down till *Chaucers* time, made an heavy pudder, and are always miserably put to't for a word to clink : which commonly fall so awkward, and unexpectedly as dropping from the Clouds by some Machine or Miracle.

Chaucer found an Herculean labour on his Hands ; And did perform to Admiration. He seizes all Provencal, French or Latin that came in his way, gives them a new garb and livery, and mingles them amongst our English: turns out English, gowty, or superannuated, to place in their room the foreigners, fit for service, train'd and accustomed to Poetical Discipline.

But tho' the Italian reformation was begun and finished well nigh at the same time by *Boccace*, *Dante*, and *Petrarch*. Our language retain'd something of the churl ; something of the Stiff and Gothish did stick upon it, till long after *Chaucer*.

Chaucer threw in Latin, French, Proven-
cial, and other Languages, like new Stum

to raise a Fermentation; In Queen *Elizabeth's* time it grew fine, but came not to an Head and Spirit, did not shine and sparkle till Mr. *Waller* set it a running. And one may observe by his Poem on the Navy, *An. 1632.* that Not the language only, but His Poetry then distinguish'd him from all his contemporaries, both in *England* and in other Nations; And from all before him upwards to *Horace* and *Virgil*. For there, besides the Language Clean and Majestick, the Thoughts new, and noble; the Verse sweet, smooth, full and strong; the turn of the Poem is happy to Admiration. The first line, with all that follow in order, leads to the conclusion, all bring to the same point and centre,

*To his own chasen more indulgent, He
Dares trust such power with so much piety.*

Here is both *Homer* and *Virgil*; the fortis *Achilles*, and the pious *Aeneas*, in the person he Compliments, and the greatness is owing to his Vertue. The Thought and Application is most Natural, Just, and true in Poetry, tho' in fact, and really, He might have no more fortitude or piety, than another body. For the repairing then of *Pauls* gave a reasonable colour for his Piety; And
that

that Navy Royal might well give him the pre-eminence in power, above *Achilles*. whoever before that time, tryed the same thoughts in Latin and in English verse ; the former always had the advantage ; the expression being more lively, free, elegant, and easie : Whereas in the English some thing or other was still amiss ; force or affectation, poverty or superfluity mangling or disguising, pinching or encombring it.

Amongst the names for these *Provencial* Poets in their own Countrey, they were call'd *Troubadours*, *Jeongleors*, and *Chanterres*, the last word is not forreign to our Cathedrals, the second *Roger Hoveden* render'd *Joculatores*, as we may turn the first to *Trompeters*, but the *Troubadours*, or *Troverres* were so named from their Invention, as we say *tresor troue*, and the Italians call them *Trovatore* ; And *Jongleors* was given them from some Musical instrument then in use, as the Greek or Latin, that were call'd *Lyrick* Poets. So our *Rob. of Grosthead* might then be a *Jongleor*, from his delight in the Harp, as we find in a preface to one of his Books in *Bodleys Library*, part of which is this.

For letwed men y undyrtoke,
In Englysh Tonge to make this Boke ;
For

For many beyn of seeche manere
 That Talys and Rymys wyle blethly here,
 In Gamys and Festys and at the ale
 Love men to lessene trotonale.
 To alle Crystyn men under Sunne
 And to gode men of Brunne,
 And specially alle by name
 The felawshipe of Sympyngname
 Robert of Brunne gretyth 3ow.

The Zers of Grace fyl than to be
 A thousand and thre hundred and thre
 On that tyne turnede by thys
 In English Tonge out of Frankys.
 I shall 3ow telle as y have herd
 Of the byshop Seynt Robert
 Hys name ys Crosseste
 Of Lyncolne so seyth the gesse
 He lobede moche to here the Harp —

The Harp, it seems, was in reputation
 at that time; And in *Provence* might be
 no hindrance to their matters of Piety; nor
 be ill Musick for the *Albigenses*, and the
 G Hereſie

Herésie of Lions. They had their Godly Romances, their *Turnement of Antichrist*, and *Fantamarie del Paganesimo*, and the like. Some wrote the Wars and Prowess of several Kings and Princes, the King of *Arles* against the Saracens, *la guerra delli Baulsenfi*, the War of the Princes of *Baulx* (the Prince of *Orange's* Family, &c.) but Comedy and Tragedy was what most of them offer'd at in their way.

The famous *Joan*, Queen of *Naples*, gave subject, to one of the last of those Poets, for five Tragedies : call'd by him, 1. The *Andreassa*. 2. The *Taranta*. 3. The *Maiorichina*. 4. The *Alemanna*, from *Andreas*, from a Prince of *Taranto*, a Prince of *Maiorca*, a German Prince (of the House of *Brunswick*) her four Husbands, murder'd by her. 5. *Giovannella*, from her own just and ignominious catastrophe.

By all this History we see the assertion of *Campanella* was not without foundation. And for the same cause our Monks might well be jealous of King *Richard*, and dislike in our other Kings, about that time, their great Correspondence and Alliances in *Provence*.

So the great cry in *Henry* the III. time (who with his Brother *Richard*, had Married

ried two of the Daughters of that Count of *Provence*, was against the *French*: (by that name noting all Forreigners.--)

* To remue the Frensse men to libbe beyond se,
Bi hor londs her and ther, and ne come noght age.

And to granti God lawes and the old Charter also,
That so ofte was igranted er, and so ofte undo.

And yet from this Marriage, sprang those our Kings which afterwards conquered *France*.

These reflections have drawn me too far beyond my purpose, which was only to treat of dramatick representations. (e) Of which kind *Stow* tells us that in the time of *R. II. An. 1391.* the *Parish Clerks of London* Acted a Play at the *Skinners Well* by *Smithfeld*, which lasted three days; and was of Matters from *Adam* and *Eve*. And in *H. IV.* his time, *Ann. 1409.* another was represented at the same place, which held eight days.

From this, and what was noted before in *France* and *Italy*, we may gather that the *Old Testament*, *Christs Passion*, and the *Acts of the Apostles*, were the ordinary en-

* *Rob. Glouc. Mss. Cotton.* (e) *Survey of London.*

ertainment on the Stage, all *Europe* over, for an hundred year or two, of our greatest ignorance and darkness. But that in *England* we had been used to another sort of Plays in the beginning of *H. VIII.* Reign may be seen from that of the * *Laureat* on Cardinal woolsey :

Like Mahound in a Play ;
No man dare him with say.

And in the same reign we find printed the Interludes of *John Heywood*. But early under Queen *Elizabeth*, our dramatick Poetry grew to something of a just symmetry and proportion in 1566. *Geo. Gascoigne* of *Grays-Inn* translated the *Supposes*, from *Ariosto*, which was there acted : as also his *Jocasta* Englished from *Euripides*, the Epilogue witten by *Chr. Tolverton*.

And after that were reckon'd for Comedy, *Edward* Earl of *Oxford* ; for Tragedy amongst others, *Thomas* Lord of *Buchurst*, whose *Gorboduck* is a fable, doubtless, better turn'd for Tragedy, than any on this side the *Alps* in his time ; and might have been a better direction to *Shakespear* and *Ben. Johnson* than any guide they have had the luck to follow. *Here*

* *Skelton*.

Here is a King, the Queen, and their two Sons. The King divides his Realm, and gives it betwixt his two Sons. They quarrel. The Elder Brother Kills the Younge. Which provokes the Mother to Kill the Elder. Thereupon the King Kills the Mother. And then to make a clear Stage the people rise and dispatch old Gorboduck.

It is objected by our Neighbours against the English, that we delight in bloody spectacles. Our Poets who have not imitated *Gorboduck* in the regularity and roundness of the design, have not failed on the Theatre to give us the *atrocité* and blood, enough in all Conscience. From this time Dramatick Poetry began to thrive with us, and flourish wonderfully. The French confess they had nothing in this kind considerable till 1635. that the Academy Royal was founded. Long before which time we had from *Shakespear*, *Fletcher*, and *Ben. Johnson* whole Volumes; at this day in possession of the Stage, and acted with greater applause than ever. Yet after all, I fear what *Quintilian* pronounced concerning the Roman Comedy, may as justly be said of English Tragedy: *In Tragædia maxime claudicamus, vix levem consequimur umbram.* In Tragedy we come short extreamly; hardly have we a slender shadow of it. CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Othello. *More of a piece. in Tragedy four parts. Fable, the Poets part. Cinthio's Novels. Othello altered for the worse. Marriage, absurd, forbidden by Horace. Fable of Othello. Use and Application. Othello's Love powder. High-German Doctor. Venetians odd taste of things. Their Women fools. Employ Strangers. Hate the Moors. Characters. Nothing of the Moor in Othello, of a Venetian in Desdemona. Of a Souldier in Jago. The Souldiers Character, by Horace. What by Shakespear. Agamemnon. Venetians no sense of Jealousie. Thoughts, in Othello, in a Horse, or Mastiff, more sensibly exprest. Ill Manners. Outragious to a Nobleman, to Humanity. Address, in telling bad news. In Princes Courts. In Aristophanes. In Rabelais. Venetian Senate. Their Wisdom.*

FROM all the Tragedies acted on our English Stage, *Othello* is said to bear the Bell away. The *Subject* is more of a piece, and there is indeed something like, there is, as it were, some phantom of a *Fable*. The *Fable* is always accounted the *Soul* of Tragedy. And it is the *Fable* which is properly the *Poets* part. Because the other
three

three parts of Tragedy, to wit the *Characters* are taken from the Moral Philosopher; the *thoughts* or sence, from them that teach *Rhetorick*: And the last part, which is the *expression*, we learn from the Grammarians.

This Fable is drawn from a Novel, compos'd in Italian by *Giraldi Cinthio*, who also was a Writer of Tragedies. And to that use employ'd such of his Tales, as he judg'd proper for the Stage. But with this of the *Moor*, he meddl'd no farther.

Shakespear alters it from the Original in several particulars, but always, unfortunately, for the worse. He bestows a name on his *Moor*; and styles him the Moor of *Venice*: a Note of pre-eminence, which neither History nor Heraldry can allow him. *Cinthio*, who knew him best, and whose creature he was, calls him simply a *Moor*. We say the Piper of *Strasburgh*; the Jew of *Florence*; And, if you please, the Pindar of *Wakefeld*: all upon Record, and memorable in their Places. But we see no such Cause for the *Moors* preferment to that dignity. And it is an affront to all Chroniclers, and Antiquaries, to top upon 'um a *Moor*, with that mark of renown, who yet had never saln within the Sphere of their Cognisance.

Then is the Moors *Wife*, from a simple Crizen, in *Cinthio*, dress'd up with her Top knots, and rais'd to be *Desdemona*, a Senators Daughter. All this is very strange; And therefore pleases such as reflect not on the improbability. This match might well be without the Parents Consent. Old *Horace* long ago forbad the Banes.

Sed non ut placidis Cocant immitia, non ut Serpentes avibus gementur, tigribus agui.

The Fable.

OThello, a *Blackmoor Captain*, by talking of his *Prowess and Feats of War*, makes *Desdemona* a *Senators Daughter* to be in love with him; and to be married to him, without her *Parents knowledge*; And having preferred *Cassio*, to be his *Lieutenant*, (a place which his *Ensign Jago* sued for) *Jago* in revenge, works the *Moor* into a *Jealousy* that *Cassio* Cuckolds him: which he effects by stealing and conveying a certain *Handkerchief*, which had, at the *Wedding*, been by the *Moor* presented to his *Bide*. Hereupon, *Othello* and *Jago* plot the Deaths
of

of Desdemona and Cassio, Othello Murders her, and soon after is convinced of her Innocence. And as he is about to be carried to Prison, in order to be punish'd for the Murder, He kills himself.

What ever rubs or difficulty may stick on the Bark, the Moral, sure, of this Fable is very instructive.

1. First, This may be a caution to all Maidens of Quality how, without their Parents consent, they run away with Blackamoors.

Di non si accompagnare con huomo, cui la natura & il cielo, & il modo della vita, disgiunge da noi. Cinthio.

Secondly, This may be a warning to all good Wives, that they look well to their Linnen.

Thirdly, This may be a lesson to Husbands, that before their Jealousie be Tragical, the proofs may be Mathematical.

Cinthio affirms that *She was not overcome by a Womanish Appetite, but by the Vertue of the Moor.* It must be a good-natur'd Reader that takes *Cinthio's* word in this case, tho' in a Novel. *Shakespear*, who is accountable both to the *Eyes*, and to the *Ears*, And to convince the very heart of an Audience, shews that *Desdemona* was

WON,

won, by hearing *Othello* talk,
Othello.

--- *I spake of most disastrous chances,
 of Moving accidents, by flood and field;
 of hair-breadth scapes i'th' imminent deadly
 of being taken by the insolent foe; (breach;
 and sold to slavery: of my redemption thence;
 and portents in my Travels History:
 wherein of Antars vast, and Desarts idle,
 rough Quarries, Rocks, and Hills, whose heads
 (touch Heaven,
 It was my hint to speak, such was my process:
 and of the Cannibals that each others eat:
 the Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
 do grow beneath their shoulders---*

This was the Charm, this was the philtre,
 the love-powder that took the Daughter
 of this Noble Venetian. This was sufficient
 to make the Black-amoor White, and
 reconcile all, tho' there had been a Cloven-
 foot into the bargain.

A meaner woman might be as-foon taken
 by *Aqua Tetrachymagogon.*

*Nodes, Cataracts, Tumours, Chilblains,
 Carnosity, Shankers, or any Cant in
 the Bill of an High-German Doctor
 is as good fustian Circumstance, and*
 as

as likely to charm a Senators Daughter. But, it seems, the noble Venetians have an other sence of things. The *Doge* himself tells us;

Doge. I think this Tale wou'd win my Daughter too.

Horace tells us,

Intererit Multum-----

Colchus an Assyrius, Thebis nutritus, an Argis.

Shakespear in this Play calls 'em the *superfuble venetians*. Yet examine through-out the Tragedy there is nothing in the noble *Desdemona*, that is not below any Countrey Chamber-maid with us.

And the account he gives of their Noblemen and Senate, can only be calculated for the latitude of *Gotham*.

The Character of that State is to employ strangers in their Wars; But shall a Poet thence fancy that they will set a Negro to be their General; or trust a *Moor* to defend them against the *Turk*? With us a Black-moor might rise to be a Trumpeter; but *Shakespear* would not have him less than a Lieutenant-

Lieutenant-General. With us a *Moor* might marry some little drab, or Small-coal Wench: *Shake-spear*, would provide him the Daughter and Heir of some great Lord, or Privy-Councillor: And all the Town should reckon it a very suitable match: Yet the English are not bred up with that hatred and aversion to the *Moors*, as are the Venetians, who suffer by a perpetual Hostility from them,

Littora littoribus contraria ---

Nothing is more odious in Nature than an improbable lye; And, certainly, never was any Play fraught, like this of *Othello*, with improbabilities.

The *Characters* or Manners, which are the second part in a Tragedy, are not less unnatural and improper, than the Fable was improbable and absurd.

Othello is made a Venetian General. We see nothing done by him, nor related concerning him, that comports with the condition of a General, or, indeed, of a Man, unless the killing himself, to avoid a death the Law was about to inflict upon him. When his Jealousy had wrought him up to a resolution of's taking revenge for the
sup-

suppos'd injury, He sets *Jago* to the fighting part, to kill *Cassio*; And chuses himself to murder the silly Woman his Wife, that was like to make no resistance.

His Love and his Jealousie are no part of a Souldiers Character, unless for Comedy.

But what is most intolerable is *Jago*. He is no Black-amoor Souldier, so we may be sure he should be like other Souldiers of our acquaintance; yet never in Tragedy, nor in Comedy, nor in Nature was a Souldier with his Character; take it in the Authors own words;

Em. *---some Eternal Villain,
Some busie, and insinuating Rogue,
Some cogging, couzening Slave, to get some Office,*

Horace Describes a Souldier otherwise:

Impiger, iracundus, inexorabilis, acer.

Shakespear knew his Character of *Jago* was inconsistent. In this very Play he pronounces,

*If thou dost deliver more or less than Truth,
Thou art no Souldier.* --

This

This he knew, but to entertain the Audience with something new and surprising, against common sense, and Nature, he would pass upon us a close, dissembling, false, insinuating rascal, instead of an open-hearted, frank, plain-dealing Souldier, a character constantly worn by them for some thousands of years in the World.

* *Tiberius Cæsar* had a Poet Arraign'd for his Life : because *Agamemnon* was brought on the Stage by him, with a character unbecoming a Souldier.

Our *Ensigns* and Subalterns, when disgusted by the Captain, throw up their Commissions, bluster, and are bare-fac'd. *Jago*, I hope, is not brought on the Stage, in a Red-Coat. I know not what Livery the Venetians wear : but am sure they hold not these conditions to be *alla soldatesca*.

*Non sia egli perfare la vendetta con insidie,
ma con la spada in mano. Cinthio.*

Nor is our Poet more discreet in his *Desdemona*, He had chosen a Souldier for his Knave: And a Venetian Lady is to be the Fool.

This Senators Daughter runs away to

* *Sueton in Tib.*

(a Carriers Inn) the *Sagittary*, with a Black-amoor : is no sooner wedded to him, but the very night she Beds him, is importuning and teizing him for a young smock-fac'd Lieutenant, *Cassio*. And tho' she perceives the *Moor* Jealous of *Cassio*, yet will she not forbear, but still rings *Cassio*, *Cassio* in both his Ears.

Roderigo is the Cully of *Jago*, brought in to be murder'd by *Jago*, that *Jago's* hands might be the more in Blood, and be yet the more abominable Villain : who without that was too wicked on all Conscience ; And had more to answer for, than any Tragedy, or Furies could inflict upon him. So there can be nothing in the *characters*, either for the profit, or to delight an Audience.

The third thing to be consider'd is the *Thoughts*. But from such *Characters*, we need not expect many that are either true, or fine, or noble.

And without these, that is, without sense or meaning, the fourth part of Tragedy, which is the *expression* can hardly deserve to be treated on distinctly. The verse rumbling in our Ears are of good use to help off the action.

In the *Neighing* of an Horse, or in the
growling

growling of a Mastiff, there is a meaning, there is as lively expression, and, may I say, more humanity, than many times in the Tragical flights of *Shakespear*.

Step then amongst the Scenesto observe the Conduct in this Tragedy.

The first we see are *Jago* and *Roderigo*, by Night in the Streets of *Venice*. After growling a long time together, they resolve to tell *Brabantio* that his Daughter is run away with the Black-a-moor. *Jago* and *Roderigo* were not of quality to be familiar with *Brabantio*, nor had any provocation from him, to deserve a rude thing at their hands. *Brabantio* was a Noble Venetian one of the Sovereign Lords, and principal persons in the Government, Peer to the most Serene *Doge*, one attended with more state, ceremony and punctillio, than any English Duke, or Nobleman in the Government will pretend to. This misfortune in his Daughter is so prodigious, so tender a point, as might puzzle the finest Wit of the most *supersubtle* Venetian to touch upon it, or break the discovery to her Father. See then how delicately *Shakespear* minces the matter :

Rod. *What ho, Brabantio, Signior Brabantio, ho.*

Jago.

Jago. *Awake, what ho, Brabantio,
Thieves, thieves, thieves :
Look to your House, your Daughter, and your
Bags
Thieves, thieves.*

Brabantio at a Window.

Bra. *What is the reason of this terrible
summons ?*

What is the matter there ?

Rod. *Signior, is all your Family within ?*

Jago. *Are your Doors lockt ?*

Bra. *Why, wherefore ask you this ?
your Gown,*

Jago. *Sir, you are robb'd, for shame put on
Your Heart is burst, you have lost half your Soul,
Even now, very now, an old black Ram
Is tapping your white Ewe : arise, arise,
Awake the snorting Citizens with the Bell,
Or else the Devil will make a Grandfire of
you, arise I sad.*

Nor have they yet done, amongst other
ribaldry, they tell him.

Jago. *Sir, you are one of those that will
not serve God, if the Devil bid you ; because
we come to do you service, you think us Rus-
sians, you'll have your Daughter covered with
a Barbary Stallion. You'll have your Nephews*

H neigh

*neigh to you ; you'le have Coursers for Cousins,
and Gennets for Germans.*

Bra. What prophane wretch art thou?

*Jago. I am one, Sir, that come to tell
you, your Daughter and the Moor, are now
making the Beast with two backs.*

In former days there wont to be kept
at the Courts of Princes some body in a
Fools Coat, that in pure simplicity might
let slip something, which made way for
the ill news, and blunted the shock, which
otherwise might have come too violent up-
on the party.

*Aristophanes puts Nicias and Demosthenes
in the disguise of Servants, that they might,
without indecency, be Drunk; And Drunk
he must make them that they might with-
out reserve lay open the Arcana of State ;
And the Knavery of their Ministers.*

After King *Francis* had been taken Pri-
soner at *Pavia*. *Rabelais* tells of a Drun-
ken bout between *Gargantua* and Fryer
John; where the valiant Fryer, bragging
over his Cups, amongst his other flights,
says he, *Had I liv'd in the days of Jesus
Christ, I would ha' guarded Mount Olivet
that the Jews should never ha' tane him.
The Devil fetch me, if I would not have
ham-*

ham string'd those Mr. Apostles, that after their good Supper, ran away so scurvily and left their Master to shift for himself. I hate a Man should run away, when he should play at sharps. Pox on't, that I shou'd not be King of France for an hundred years or two. I wou'd curtail all our French Dogs that ran away at Pavia.

This is address, this is truly Satyr, where the preparation is such, that the thing principally design'd, falls in, as it only were of course.

But Shakespear shews us another sort of address, his manners and good breeding must not be like the rest of the Civil World. Brabantio was not in Masquerade, was not incognito; Jago well knew his rank and dignity.

*Jago. The Magnifico is much beloved,
And bath in his effect, a voice potential
As double as the Duke-----*

But besides the Manners to a Magnifico, humanity cannot bear that an old Gentleman in his misfortune should be insulted over with such a rabble of Skoundrel language, when no cause or provocation. Yet thus it is on our Stage, this is our

School of good manners, and the *Speculum Vitæ*.

But our *Magnifico* is here in the dark, nor are yet his Robes on : attend him to the Senate house, and there see the difference, see the effects of Purple.

So, by and by, we find the Duke of *Venice* with his Senators in Council, at Midnight, upon advice that the Turks, or Ottamites, or both together, were ready in transport Ships, put to Sea, in order to make a Descent upon *Cyprus*. This is the posture, when we see *Brabantio*, and *Othello* join them: By their Conduct and manner of talk, a body must strain hard to fancy the Scene at *Venice*; And not rather in some of our Cinq-ports, where the Bailly and his Fisher-men are knocking their heads together on account of some Whale; or some terrible broil upon the Coast. But to shew them true Venetians, the Maritime affairs stick not long on their hand; the publick may sink or swim. They will sit up all night to hear a Doctors Commons, Matrimonial, Cause. And have the Merits of the Cause at large laid open to 'em, that they may decide it before they Stir. What can be pleaded to keep awake their attention so wonderfully?

Never

Never, sure, was *form* of *pleading* so tedious and so heavy, as this whole Scene, and midnight entertainment. Take his own words : says the *Respondent*.

Oth. Most potent, grave, and reverend Signiors,
My very noble, and approv'd good Masters :
That I have tane away this old mans Daughter;
It is most true : true, I have Married her,
The very front and head of my offending,
Hath this extent, no more : rude I am in my
speech.

And little blest with the set phrase of peace,
For since these Arms of mine had seven years pith,
Till now some nine Moons wasted, they have us'd
Their dearest action in the Tented Field:
And little of this great World can I speak,
More than pertains to Broils and Battail,
And therefore little shall I grace my Cause,
In speaking of my self: yet by your gracious patience
I would a round unravish'd Tale deliver,
Of my whole course of love, what drags, what
charms
What Conjurat[i]on, and what mighty Magick,
(for such proceedings am I charg'd withal)
I won his Daughter.

All this is but *Preamble*, to tell the Court
that He wants words. This was the Elo-

quence which kept them up all Night, and drew their attention, in the midst of their alarms.

One might rather think the novelty, and strangeness of the case prevail'd upon them: no, the Senators do not reckon it strange at all. Instead of starting at the Prodigy, every one is familiar with *Desdemona*, as he were her own natural Father, rejoice in her good fortune, and wish their own several Daughters as hopefully married. Should the Poet have provided such a Husband for an only Daughter of any noble Peer in *England*, the Black-amoor must have chang'd his Skin, to look our House of Lords in the Face.

Æschylus is noted in *Aristophanes* for letting *Niobe* be two or three *Acts* on the Stage, before she speaks. Our Noble Venetian, sure, is in the other more unnatural extreme. His words flow in abundance; no Butter-Queen can be more lavish. Nay: he is for talking of State-Affairs too, above any body:

Bra. Please it your Grace, on to the State Affairs----

Yet is this *Brabantio* sensible of his affliction;

sliction; before the end of the Play his Heart breaks, he dies.

*Gra. Poor Desdemona, I am glad thy Father's dead,
Thy match was mortal to him, and pure grief
Shore his old thread intwain---*

A third part in a Tragedy is the *Thoughts*: from Venetians, Noblemen, and Senators, we may expect fine *Thoughts*. Here is a tryal of skill: for a parting blow, the *Duke*, and *Brabantio* Cap sentences. Where then shall we seek for the *Thoughts*, if we let slip this occasion? says the Duke:

Duk: Let me speak like your self and lay a Sentence,

*Which like a greese or step, may help these lovers
Into your favour.*

*When remedies are past the grief is ended,
By seeing the worst which late on hopes depended,
To mourn a mischief that is past and gone,
Is the next way to draw more mischief on;
What cannot be preserv'd when Fortune takes,
Patience her injury a Mocker makes.*

The rob'd that smiles, steals something from a
(Thief,

He robs himself, that spends an hopeless grief.

Bra. So let the *Turk* of *Cyprus* be guile
 We lose it not so long as we can smile;
 He bears the sentence well, that nothing bears
 But the free comfort which from thence he bears,
 But he bears both the sentence and the sorrow,
 That to pay grief must of poor patience borrow:
 These Sentences to Sugar, or to Gall,
 Being strong on both sides are equivocal.
 But words are words, I never yet did bear,
 That the bruise'd Heart was pierced through
 the Ear.
 Beseech you now to the affairs of State.

How far wou'd the Queen of *Sheba* have
 travell'd to hear the Wildom of our Noble
Venetians? or is not our * *Brentford* a *Vene-*
tian Colony, for methinks their talk is the
 very same?

What says Prince *Volscius* ?
Volscius.

What shall I do, what conduct shall I find
 To lead me through this twy light of my mind?

What says *Amaryllis* ?

Arma. I hope its slow beginning will portend
 A forward exit to all future end.

* Rehearsal.

What

What says Prince *Pretty-man* ?

Pre. *Was ever Son yet brought to this distress,
To be, for being a Son, made Fatherless ?
Ah, you just Gods, rob me not of a Father,
The being of a Son take from me rather.*

Panurge, sadly perplexed, and trying all the means in the World, to be well advised, in that knotty point *whether he should Marry, or no*; Amongst the rest, consults *Raminigrobus*, an old Poet; as one belonging to *Apollo*; And from whom he might expect something like an Oracle. And he was not disappointed. From *Raminigrobus* he had this Answer:

*Prenez la, ne la prenez pas.
Si vous la prenez, c'est bien fait.
Si ne la prenez, en effet
Ce sera ouvre par compas.
Gallopez, mais allez le pas.
Recullez, entrés y de fait.
Prenez la, ne.*

*Take, or not take her, off or on :
Handy dandy is your Lot.
When her name you write, you blot.*

Tu

'Tis undone, when all is done.

Ended, ere it is begun.

Never Gallop whilst you Trot.

Set not forward, when you run,

Nor be single, tho' alone,

Take, or not take her, off, or on.

What provocation, or cause of malice our Poet might have to Libel the most *Serene Republick*, I cannot tell: but certainly, there can be no wit in this representation.

For the *Second Act*, our Poet having dispatcht his affairs at *Venice*, shews the *Action* next (I know not how many leagues off) in the Island of *Cyprus*. The Audience must be there too: And yet our *Bays* had it never in his head, to make any provision of Transport Ships for them.

In the days that the *Old Testament* was Acted in *Clerkenwell*, by the *Parish Clerks* of *London*, the Israelites might pass through the *Red sea*: but alas, at this time, we have no *Moses* to bid the Waters *make way*, and to Usher us along. Well, the absurdities of this kind break no Bones. They may make Fools of us; but do not hurt our *Morals*.

Come a-shoar then, and observe the
Coun-

Countenance of the People, after the dreadful Storm, and their apprehensions from an Invasion by the Ottornites, their succour and friends scatter'd and tost, no body knew whither. The first that came to Land was *Cassio*, his first Salutation to the Governour, *Montanio*, is :

*Cas. Thanks to the valiant of this Isle:
That so approve the Moor, and let the Heavens
Give him defence against their Elements,
For I have lost him on the dangerous Sea.*

To him the Governour speaks, indeed, like a Man in his wits.

Mont. Is he well Shipt?

The Lieutenant answers thus.

*Cas. His Bark is stoutly Tymber'd, and his
Pilot
Of very expert, and approv'd allowance,
Therefore my hopes (not surfeited to death)
Stand in bold care.*

The Governours first question was very proper; his next question, in this posture of affairs, is :

Monr.

Mont. But, good Lientenant, is our general Wiv'd?

A question so remote, so impertinent and absurd, so odd and surprising never entered *Bayes's Pericranium*. Only the answer may Tally with it.

Cas. Most fortunately, he hath atcheiv'd a Maid,
That Parragons description, and wild fame:
One that excels the quirks of blasoning Pens :
And in the essential vesture of Creation,
Does bear an excellency-----

They who like this Authors writing will not be offended to find so much repeated from him. I pretend not here to tax either the *Sense*, or the *Language*; those *Circumstances* had their proper place in the Venetian Senate. What I now cite is to shew how probable, how natural, how reasonable the Conduct is, all along.

I thought it enough that *Cassio* should be acquainted with a Virgin of that rank and consideration in *Venice*, as *Desdemona*. I wondred that in the Senate-house every one should know her so familiarly : yet,
here

here also at *Cyprus*, every body is in a rapture at the name of *Desdemona*: except only *Montanio* who must be ignorant; that *Cassio*, who has an excellent cut in shaping an Answer, may give him the satisfaction:

Mont. *What is she?*

Cal. *She that I spoke of: our Captains Captain,
Left in the Conduet of the bold Jago,
Whose footing here anticipates our thoughts
A Sennets speed: great Jove Othello guard,
And fixell his Sail with thine own powerful
breath,
That he may bless this Bay with his Tall Ship:
And swiftly come to Desdemona's Arms,
Give renewed fire to our extincted Spirits,
And bring all Cyprus comfort:*

Enter Desdemona, &c.

---Obehold,
*The riches of the Ship is come on shoar.
Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your Knees:
Hail to the Lady: and the Grace of Heaven
Before, behind thee, and on every hand.
Enwheel the round---*

In

In the name of phrenzy, what means this Souldier ? or would he talk thus, if he meant any thing at all ? Who can say *Shakespear* is to blame in his *Charaſter* of a Souldier ? Has he not here done him reaſon ? When cou'd our *Tramontains* talk at this rate ? but our *Jarſey* and *Garnſey* Captains muſt not ſpeak ſo fine things, nor compare with the Mediterranean, or Ga-riſons in *Rhodes* and *Cyprus*.

The next thing our Officer does, is to ſalute *Jago's* Wife, with this *Conge* to the Husband,

*Caſ. Good Ancient, you are welcome, wel-
come Miſtriſs,
Let it not Gall your Patience, good Jago,
That I extend my Manners, 'tis my Breeding,
That gives me this bold ſhew of Curteſy.*

*Jago. Sir, would ſhe give you ſo much of her lips,
As of her tongue ſhe has beſtow'd on me,
You'd have enough.*

Deſ. Alas ! ſhe has no ſpeech.

Now follows a long rabble of Jack-pud-
den farce betwixt *Jago* and *Deſdemona*,
that runs on with all the little plays, jingle,
and

and trash below the patience of any Country Kitchen-maid with her Sweet-heart. The Venetian *Donna* is hard put to't for pastime! And this is all, when they are newly got on shoar, from a dismal Tempest, and when every moment she might expect to hear her Lord (as she calls him) that she runs so mad after, is arriv'd or lost. And moreover.

---*In a Town of War;*

---*The peoples Hearts brimsful of fear.*

Never in the World had any Pagan Poet his Brains turn'd at this Monstrous rate. But the ground of all this Bedlam-Buffoonry we saw, * in the case of the French *Strollers*, the Company for Acting *Christs Passion*, or the *Old Testament*, were Carpenters, Coblers, and illiterate fellows; who found that the Drolls, and Fooleries interlarded by them, brought in the rabble, and lengthened their time, so they got Money by the bargain.

Our *Shakespear*, doubtless, was a great Master in this craft. These Carpenters and Coblers were the guides he followed. And it is then no wonder that we find so much

* Page 54.

farce,

farce and *Apocryphal Matter* in his Tragedies. Thereby un-hallowing the Theatre, profaning the name of Tragedy; And instead of representing Men and Manners, turning all Morality, good sence, and humanity into mockery and derision.

But pass we to something of a more serious air and Complexion. *Othello* and his Bride are the first Night, no sooner warm in Bed together, but a Drunken Quarrel happening in the Garison, two Souldiers Fight; And the General rises to part the Fray: He swears.

*Othel. Now by Heaven,
My blood begins my safer guides to rule,
And passion, having my best judgment cool'd,
Assays to lead the way: if once I stir,
Or do but lift this arm, the best of you
Shall sink in my rebuke: give me to know
How this foul rout began; who set it on,
And he that is approv'd in this offence,
Tho' he had twin'd with me both at a birth,
Should lose me: what, in a Town of War,
Yet wild, the peoples Hearts brimful of
fear,
To manage private, and domestick quarrels;
In Night, and on the Court, and guard of safety,
'Tis Monstrous, Jago, who began?*

In

In the days of yore, Souldiers did not swear in this fashion. What should a Souldier say farther, when he swears, unless he blaspheme? action shou'd speak the rest. What follows must be *ex ore gladii*; He is to rap out an Oath, not Wire-draw and Spin it out: by the style one might judge that *Shakespears* Souldiers were never bred in a Camp, but rather had belong'd to some Affidavit-Office. Consider also throughout this whole Scene, how the Moorish General proceeds in examining into this *Rout*; No Justice *Clod-pate* could go on with more Phlegm and deliberation. The very first night that he lyes with the *Divine Desdemona* to be thus interrupted, might provoke a Mans Christian Patience to swear in another style. But a Negro General is a Man of strange Mettle. Only his Venetian Bride is a match for him. She understands that the Souldiers in the Garison are by th'ears together: And presently she at midnight, is inamongst them.

Desd. What's the matter there?

Othel. All's well now Sweeting---

Come away to Bed---

In the beginning of this *second Act*, before

fore they had lain together, *Desdemona* was said to be, *our Captains Captain* ; Now they are no sooner in Bed together, but *Jago* is advising *Cassio* in these words.

Jago. ---- *Our Generals Wife is now the General, I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted, and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and devotement of her parts and graces. Confess your self freely to her, importune her ; she'll help to put you in your place again : she is so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, that she holds it a vice in her goodness, not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her Husband, intreat her to splinter---*

And he says afterwards.

Jago. ---- *'Tis most easie
The inclining Desdemona to subdue,
In any honest suit. She's fram'd as fruitful,
As the free Elements : And then for her
To win the Moor, were't to renounce his Baptism,
All seals and symbols of redeemed sin,
His soul is so enfeiter'd to her love,
That she may make, unmake, do what she list :
Even as her appetite shall play the God
With his weak function ---*

This

This kind of discourse implies an experience and long conversation, the Honey-Moon over, and a Marriage of some standing. Would any man, in his wits, talk thus of a Bridegroom and Bride the first night of their coming together?

Yet this is necessary for our Poet; it would not otherwise serve his turn. This is the source, the foundation of his Plot; hence is the spring and occasion for all the Jealousie and bluster that ensues.

Nor are we in better circumstances for *Roderigo*. The last thing said by him in the former *Act* was,

Rod. --- *I'll go sell all my Land.*

A fair Estate is sold to put money in his *Parse*, for this adventure. And lo here, the next day.

Rod. *I do follow here in the Chace, not like a Hound that hunts, but one that fills up the cry: My Money is almost spent. I have been tonight exceedingly well cudgell'd, I think the issue will be, I shall have so much experience for my pains, and so no Money at all, and with a little more will return to Venice.*

The Venetian squire had a good riddance for his Acres. The Poet allows him just time to be once drunk, a very conscionable reckoning!

In this *Second Act*, the face of affairs could in truth be no other, than

*--In a Town of War,
Tet wild, the peoples Hearts brim-ful of fear.*

But nothing either in this *Act*, or in the rest that follow, shew any colour or complexion, any resemblance or proportion to that face and posture it ought to bear. Should a Painter draw any one *Scene* of this Play, and write over it, *This is a Town of War*; would any body believe that the Man were in his senses? would not a *Goose*, or *Dromedary* for it, be a name as just and suitable? And what in Painting would be absurd, can never pass upon the World for Poetry.

Cassio having escaped the Storm comes on shoar at *Cyprus*, that night gets Drunk, Fights, is turn'd out from his Command, grows sober again, takes advice how to be restor'd, is all Repentance and Mortification: yet before he sleeps, is in the Morning at his Generals door with a noise of Fiddles, and

and a Droll to introduce him to a little Mouth-speech with the Bride.

Cassio. *Give me advantage of some brief
(discourse*

With Desdemona alone.

Em. *Pray you come in,
I will bestow you, where you shall have time
To speak your bosom freely.*

So, they are put together : And when he had gone on a good while speaking his bosom, Desdemona answers him.

Des. *Do not doubt that, before Emilia here,
I give thee warrant of thy place; assure thee,
If I do vow a friendship, I'll perform it,
To the last article---*

Then after a ribble rabble of fulsome impertinence. She is at her Husband slap dash :

Desd. - *Good love, call him back.*

Othel. *Not now, sweet Desdemona, some
(other time.*

Desd. *But shall't shortly ?*

Othel. *The sooner, sweet, for you.*

Desd. *Shall't be to-night at Supper ?*

Othel. *No, not tonight.*

Desd. *To-Morrow Dinner then?*

Othel. *I shall not dine at home,
I meet the Captains at the Citadel.*

Desd. *Why then to morrow night, or Tuesday*

(morn,

Or night, or Wednesday morn ?

After forty lines more, at this rate, they part, and then comes the wonderful Scene, where *Jago* by thrugs, half words, and ambiguous reflections, works *Othello* up to be Jealous. One might think, after what we have seen, that there needs no great cunning, no great poetry and address to make the *Moar* Jealous. Such impatience, such a rout for a handsome young fellow, the very morning after her Marriage must make him either to be jealous, or to take her for a *Changeling*, below his Jealousie. After this Scene, it might strain the Poets skill to reconcile the couple, and allay the Jealousie. *Jago* now can only *actum agere*, and vex the audience with a nauseous repetition.

Whence comes it then, that this is the top scene, the Scene that raises *Othello* above all other Tragedies on our Theatres ? It is purely from the *Action*: from the
Mops,

Mops and the Mows, the Grimace, the Grins and Gesticulation. Such scenes as this have made all the World run after *Harlequin* and *Scaramuccio*.

The several degrees of *Action* were amongst the Ancients distinguish'd by the *Cothurnus*, the *Soccus*, and by the *Planipes*.

Had this scene been represented at old *Rome*, *Orbello* and *Jago* must have quitted their Buskins; They must have played *bare-foot*: the spectators would not have been content without seeing their *Podometry*; And the Jealousie work at the very Toes of 'em. Words, be they Spanish, or Polish, or any inarticulate sound, have the same effect, they can only serve to distinguish, and, as it were, beat time to the *Action*. But here we see a known Language does wofully encumber, and clog the operation: as either forc'd, or heavy, or trifling, or incoherent, or improper, or most what improbable. When no words interpose to spoil the concept, every one interprets as he likes best. So in that memorable dispute betwixt *Panurge* and our English Philosopher in *Rabelais*, perform'd without a word speaking; The Theologians, Physicians, and Surgeons, made one inference; the Lawyers, Civilians, and Canonists, drew another

another conclusion more to their mind.

Othello the night of his arrival at *Cyprus*, is to consummate with *Desdemona*, they go to Bed. Both are rais'd and run into the Town amidst the Souldiers that were a fighting : then go to Bed again, that morning he sees *Cassio* with her ; She importunes him to restore *Cassio*. *Othello* shews nothing of the Souldiers Mettle : but like a tedious, drawling, tame Goose, is gaping after any paultrey insinuation, labouring to be jealous ; And catching at every blown surmize.

Jago. *My Lord, I see you are moved.*

Oth. *No, not much moved.*

Do not think but Desdemona is honest.

Jag. *Long live she so, and long live you to think*
(*so.*)

Oth. *And yet how Nature erring from it self,*

Jag. *I, There's the point: as to be bold with you,
Not to affect many proposed Matches*

*Of her own clime, complexion, and degree,
Wherein we see, in all things, Nature tends,
Eye, we may smell in such a will most rank,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural---*

The Poet here is certainly in the right, and
by consequence the foundation of the Play
must

must be concluded to be Monstrous; And
the constitution, all over, to be *most rank*,
Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.

Which instead of moving pity, or any
passion Tragical and Reasonable, can produce
nothing but horror and aversion, and what
is odious and grievous to an Audience.
After this fair Mornings work, the Bride
enters, drops a Cursey.

Desd. *How now, my dear Othello,
Your Dinner, and the generous Islanders
By you invited, do attend your presence.*

Oth. *I am to blame.*

Desd. *Why is your speech so faint? Are
you not well?*

Oth. *I have a pain upon my Fore-head,
dear.*

Michael Cassio came not from *Venice* in
the Ship with *Desdemona*, nor till this
Morning could be suspected of an opportu-
nity with her. And 'tis now but Dinner
time; yet the *Moor* complains of his Fore-
head. He might have set a Guard on *Cassio*,
or have lockt up *Desdemona*, or have ob-
serv'd their carriage a day or two longer.
He is on other occasions phlegmatick
enough:

enough : this is very hasty. But after Dinner we have a wonderful flight :

Othel. What sense had I of her stoln hours of lust ?

*I saw't not, thought it not, it harm'd not me :
I slept the next night well, was free and merry,
I found not Cassio's kisses on her lips---*

A little after this, says he,

Oth. Give me a living reason that she's disloyal.

*Jago. ---I lay with Cassio lately,
And being troubled with a raging Footh, I
could not sleep ;*

*There are a kind of men so loose of Soul,
That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs,
One of this kind is Cassio :*

*In sleep I heard him say : sweet Desdemona,
Let us be wary, let us hide our loves :*

*And then, Sir, wou'd he gripe, and wring
my hand,*

*Cry out, sweet Creature ; and then kiss me
hard,*

*As if he pluckt up kisses by the roots,
That grew upon my Lips, then laid his Leg
Over my Thigh, and sigh'd, and kiss'd, and then*

Cry'd, cursed fare, that gave thee to the Moor.

By

By the Rapture of *Othello*, one might think that he raves, is not of sound Memory, forgets that he has not yet been two nights in the Matrimonial Bed with his *Desdemona*. But we find *Jago*, who should have a better memory, forging his lies after the very same Model. The very night of their Marriage at *Venice*, the Moor, and also *Cassio*, were sent away to *Cyprus*. In the *Second Act*, *Othello* and his Bride go the first time to Bed; The *Third Act* opens the next morning. The parties have been in view to this moment. We saw the opportunity which was given for *Cassio* to speak his bosom to her, *once*, indeed, might go a great way with a Venetian. But *once*, will not do the Poets business; The *Audience* must suppose a great many bouts, to make the plot operate. They must deny their senses, to reconcile it to common sense: or make it any way consistent, and hang together.

Nor, for the most part, are the single thoughts more consistent, than is the economy: The Indians do as they ought in painting the Devil White: but says *Othello*:

Oth. Her name that was as fresh
As Dian's Visage, is now begrim'd and black,
As mine own face ... There

There is not a Monky but understands
Nature better ; not a Pug in *Barbary* that
has not a truer taste of things.

Othel. ---- O now for ever
*Farewel the tranquil mind, farewel content ;
Farewel the plumed troop, and the big Wars,
That make Ambition Vertue : O farewel,
Farewel the neighing Steed, and the shrill
Trump,
The spirit stirring Drum, th' ear-piercing Fief,
The royal Banner, and all quality,
Pride, Pomp, and Circumstance of glorious War,
And O ye Mortal Engines, whose wide throats
Th' immortal Joves great clamours counterfeit,
Farewel, Othello's occupation's gone.*

These lines are recited here, not for any
thing Poetical in them, besides the sound,
that pleases. Yet this sort of imagery and
amplification is extreamly taking, where
it is just and natural. As in *Gorboduck*,
when a young Princess on whose fancy the
personal gallantry of the Kings Son then
slain, had made a strong impresson, thus,
out of the abundance of her imagination,
pours forth her grief :

Marcella.

Marcella: --- Ah noble Prince! how oft
 have I beheld
 Thee mounted on thy fierce, and trampling
 Steed,
 Shining in Armour bright before the Tilt,
 Wearing thy Mistress sleeve ty'd on thy helm.
 Then charge thy staff, to please thy Ladies Eye,
 That bow'd the head piece of thy friendly Foe?
 How oft in arms, on Horse to bend the Mace,
 How oft in arms, on foot, to break the Spear;
 Which never now these Eyes may see agen?

Notwithstanding that this Scene had pro-
 ceeded with fury and bluster sufficient to
 make the whole Isle ring of his Jealousy,
 yet is Desdemona diverting her self with a
 paulty buffoon and only solicitous in quest
 of Cassio:

Desd. Seek him, bid him come hither,
 tell him ---

Where shou'd I lose that Handcherchief, E-
 milia?

Believe me I had rather lose my Purse,
 Full of Crusado's: And but my noble Moor
 Is true of mind, and made of no such baseness,
 As Jealous Creatures are; it were enough
 To put him to ill thinking.

Em.

Em. *Is he not Jealous ?*

Desd. *Who he ? I think the Sun, where
he was born,
Drew all such humours from him.*

By this manner of speech one wou'd gather the couple had been yolk'd together a competent while, what might she say more, had they cohabited, and had been Man and Wife seven years ?

She spies the Moor.

Desd. *I will not leave him now,
Till Cassio is recall'd.*

I have sent to bid Cassio come speak with you.

Othel. --- *Lend me thy Handkerchief.*

Desd. --- *This is a trick to put me from
my suit.*

I pray let Cassio be receiv'd again.

Em. --- *Is not this man Jealous ?*

--- *'Tis not a year or two shews us a man ---*

As if for the first year or two, *Othello* had not been jealous ? This *third Act* begins in the morning, at noon she drops the Handkerchief, after dinner she misses it, and then follows all this outrage and horrible clutter about it. If we believe a small
Damofel

Damofel in the last Scene of this *Act*, this day is effectually seven days.

Bianca. --- *What keep a week away ! seven days, seven nights, Eightscore eight hours, and lovers absent hours, More tedious than the Dial eightscore times. Oh weary reckoning !*

Our Poet is at this plunge, that whether this *Act* contains the compass of one day, of seven days, or of seven years, or of all together, the repugnance and absurdity would be the same. For *Othello*, all the while, has nothing to say or to do, but what loudly proclaim him jealous: her friend and confident *Emilia* again and again rounds her in the Ear that *the Man* is Jealous: yet this Venetian dame is neither to see, nor to hear; nor to have any sense or understanding, nor to strike any other note but *Cassio*, *Cassio*.

The Scotchman hearing *trut Scot, trut Scot*, when he saw it came from a Bird, checkt his Choler, and put up his Sward again, with a *Braad O God, G. if thaa'dst ben a Maan, as th'art ane Green Geuse, I sud ha stuck tha' to thin heart.* Desdemona
and

and that Parrot might pass for Birds of a Feather; and if *Sauney* had not been more generous than *Othello*, but continued to insult the poor Creature after this beastly example, he would have given our Poet as good stuff to work upon: And his *Tragedy of the Green Goose*, might have deserv'd a better audience, than this of *Desdemona*, or *The Moor of Venice*.

ACT IV.

Enter Jago and Othello:

Jago. *Will you think so?*

Othel. *Think so, Jago.*

Jago. *What, to kiss in private?*

Othel. *An unauthorised kiss.*

Jago. *Or to be naked with her friend a-bed, An hour or more, not meaning any harm?*

Othel. *Naked a-bed, Jago, and not mean harm? ----*

At this gross rate of trifling, our General and his Auncient March on most heroically; till the Jealous Booby has his Brains turn'd; and falls in a Trance. Would any imagine this to be the Language of Venetians, of Souldiers, and mighty Captains?

no

no *Bartholomew Droll* cou'd subsist upon such trash. But lo, a *Stratagem* never presented in *Tragedy*.

*Jago. Stand you while a part ---
 --- Ingrave your self;
 And mark the Feers, the Gibes, and notable
 scorns,
 That dwell in every region of his face,
 For I will make him tell the tale a new,
 Where, how, how oft, how long ago, and when,
 He has, and is again to Cope your Wife:
 I say, but mark his gesture ---*

With this device *Othello* withdraws.
 Says *Jago* aside.

*Jago. Now will I question Cassio of Bianca,
 A Huswife ---
 That doats on Cassio ---
 He when he hears of her cannot refrain
 From the excess of Laughter ---
 As he shall smile, Othello shall go mad,
 And his unbookish jealousy must conster
 Poor Cassio's smiles, gesture, and light be-
 vour
 Quite in the wrong ---*

So to work they go : And *Othello* is as wise a commentator, and makes his applications pat, as heart cou'd wish --- but I wou'd not expect to find this Scene acted nearer than in *Southwark Fair*. But the *Handkerchief* is brought in at last, to stop all holes, and close the evidence. So now being satisfied with the proof, they come to a resolution, that the offenders shall be murdered.

Othel. --- *But yet the pity of it, Jago, ah the pity.*

Jago. *If you be so fond over her iniquity give her Patent to offend. For if it touches not you, it comes near no Body.*

Do it not with poison, strangle her in her Bed; Even the Bed she has contaminated.

Oth. *Good, good, the Justice of it pleases, very good.*

Jago. *And for Cassio, let me be his undertaker ---*

Jago had some pretence to be discontent with *Othello* and *Cassio*: And what passed hitherto, was the operation of revenge. *Desdemona* had never done him harm, always kind to him, and to his Wife; was his

his Country-woman, a Dame of quality : for him to abet her Murder, shews nothing of a Souldier, nothing of a Man, nothing of Nature in it. The *Ordinary of New gate* never had the like Monster to pass under his examination. Can it be any diversion to see a Rogue beyond what the Devil ever finish'd ? Or wou'd it be any instruction to an Audience ? *Jago* cou'd desire no better than to set *Cassio* and *Othello*, his two Enemies, by the Ears together ; so he might have been reveng'd on them both at once : And chusing for his own share, the Murder of *Desdemona*, he had the opportunity to play booty, and save the poor harmless wretch. But the Poet must do every thing by contraries : to surprize the Audience still with something horrible and prodigious, beyond any human imagination. At this rate he must out-do the Devil, to be a Poet in the rank with *Shakespear*.

Soon after this, arrives from *Venice*, *Ludovico*, a noble Cousin of *Desdemona*, presently she is at him also, on the behalf of *Cassio*.

*Desd. Cousin there's fallen between him
and my Lord*

An unkind breach, but you shall make all well.

Lud. *Is there division 'twixt my Lord and Cassio.*

Desd. *A most unhappy one, I wou'd do much To attone them, for the love I bear to Cassio.*

By this time, we are to believe the couple have been a week or two Married: And Othello's Jealousie that had rag'd so loudly, and had been so uneasie to himself, must have reach'd her knowledge. The Audience have all heard him more p'ain with her, than was needful to a Venetian capacity: And yet she must still be impertinent in her suit for Cassio, well, this *Magnifico* comes from the *Doge*, and Senators, to displace Othello.

Lud. ---Deputing Cassio in his Government.

Desd. *Trust me, I am glad on't.*

Oth. *Indeed.*

Desd. *My Lord.*

Oth. *I am glad to see you mad.*

Desd. *How, sweet Othello.*

Oth. *Devil.*

Desd. *I have not deserved this.*

Oth. *O Devil, Devil---*

Out of my sight.

Desd. *I will not stay to offend you.*

Lud. *Truly, an obedient Lady.*

I do

I do beseech your Lordship call her back.

Oth. Mistress.

Desd. My Lord.

Oth. What would you with her Sir ?

Lud. Who, I, my Lord ?

Oth. I, you did wish that I wou'd make her turn.

*Sir, she can turn, and turn, and yet go on,
And turn agen, and she can weep, Sir, weep.*

And she is obedient, as you say, obedient :

Very obedient ----

Lud. What strike your Wife ?

Of what flesh and blood does our Poet make these noble Venetians ? the men without Gall ; the Women without either Brains or Sense ? A Senators Daughter runs away with this Black-amoor ; the Government employs this Moor to defend them against the Turks, so resent not the Moors Marriage at present, but the danger over, her Father gets the Moor Cashier'd, sends his Kinsman, Seignior *Ludovico*, to *Cyprus* with the Commission for a new General ; who, at his arrival, finds the Moor calling the Lady his Kinswoman, Whore and Strumpet, and kicking her : what says the *Magnifico* ?

K ;

Lud.

Lud. *My Lord this would not be believ'd
in Venice,
Tho' I shou'd swear I saw't, 'tis very much ;
Make her amends : she weeps.*

The Moor has no body to take his part, no body of his Colour : *Ludovico* has the new Governour *Cassio*, and all his Countrymen Venetians about him. What Poet would give a villanous Black amoor this Ascendant ? What Tramontain could fancy the Venetians so low, so despicable, or so patient ? this outrage to an injur'd Lady, the *Drvine Desdemona*, might in a colder Climate have provoked some body to be her Champion : but the Italians may well conclude we have a strange Genius for Poetry. In the next Scene *Othello* is examining the supposed Bawd ; then follows another storm of horroure and outrage against the poor Chicken, his Wife. Some Drayman or drunken Tinker might possibly treat his drab at this sort of rate, and mean no harm by it : but for his excellency, a My lord General, to Serenade a Senator's Daughter with such a volly of scoundrel filthy Language, is sure the most absurd Maggot that ever bred from any Poets addle Brain.

And

And she is in the right, who tells us,

Emil. --- *A Begger in his Drink,*
Could not have laid such terms upon his Callet.

This is not to describe passion. *Seneca*
 had another notion in the Case :

Parvæ loquuntur curæ, ingentes stupent.

And so had the Painter, who drew *Agamemnon* with his Face covered. Yet to make all worse, her Murder, and the manner of it, had before been resolv'd upon and concerted. But nothing is to provoke a Venetian ; she takes all in good part ; had the Scene lain in *Russia*, what cou'd we have expected more ? With us a Tinkers Trull wou'd be Nettled, wou'd repartee with more spirit, and not appear so void of spleen.

Desd. *O good Jago,*
What shall I do to win my Lord agen ?

No Woman bred out of a Pig-stye, cou'd talk so meanly. After this, she is call'd to Supper with *Othello*, *Ludovico*, &c. after that comes a filthy sort of Pastoral Scene,

where the *Wedding Sheets*, and Song of *Willow*, and her Mothers Maid, poor *Barbara*, are not the least moving things in this entertainment. But that we may not be kept too long in the dumps, nor the melancholy *Scenes* lye too heavy, undigested on our Stomach, this *Act* gives us for a farewell, the *salsa*, *O picante*, some quibbles, and smart touches, as *Ovid* had Prophesied:

Est & in obscænos deflexa Tragedia risus.

The last *Act* begins with *Jago* and *Roderigo*; Who a little before had been upon the huff;

Rod. I say it is not very well: I will make my self known to Desdemona; if she will return me my Jewels, I will give over my suit, and repent my unlawful sollicitation, if not, assure your self, I ll seek satisfaction of you.

Roderigo, a Noble Venetian had sought *Desdemona* in Marriage, is troubl'd to find the Moor had got her from him; advises with *Jago*, who wheedles him to sell his Estate, and go over the Sea to *Cyprus*, in expectation to Cuckold *Othello*, there having

ving cheated *Roderigo* of all his Money and Jewels, on pretence of presenting them to *Desdemona*, our Gallant grows angry, and would have satisfaction from *Jago*; who sets all right, by telling him *Cassio* is to be Governour, *Othello* is going with *Desdemona* into *Mauritania*; to prevent this, you are to murder *Cassio*, and then all may be well.

Jago. He goes into *Mauritania*, and takes with him the fair *Desdemona*, unless his abode be lingred here by some accident, wherein none can be so determinate, as the removing of *Cassio*.

Had *Roderigo* been one of the *Bauditi*, he might not much sliick at the Murder. But why *Roderigo* should take this for payment, and risque his person where the prospect of advantage is so very uncertain and remote, no body can imagine. It had need be a *super-subtile* Venetian that this Plot will pass upon. Then after a little spurt of villany and Murder, we are brought to the most lamentable, that ever appear'd on any Stage. A noble Venetian Lady is to be murdered by our Poet; in sober sadness, purely for being a Fool. No Pagan Poet but wou'd have

have found some *Machine* for her deliverance. *Pegasus* wou'd have strain'd hard to have brought old *Perseus* on his back, time enough, to rescue this *Andromeda* from so foul a Monster. Has our Christian Poetry no generosity, nor bowels? Ha, Sir *Lancelot*! ha *St. George*! will no Ghost leave the shades for us in extremity, to save a distressed Damosel?

But for our comfort, however felonious is the Heart, hear with what soft language, he does approach her, with a Candle in his Hand :

Oth. Put out the light and then put out the light ;

*If I quenck thee, thou flaming Minister,
I can again thy former light restore ---*

Who would call him Barbarian, Monster, Savage? Is this a Black-amoor?

Soles occidere & redire possunt---

The very Soul and Quintessence of Sir *George Etheridge*.

One might think the General should not glory much in this action, but make an hasty work on't, and have turn'd his Eyes away from so unsouldierly an

an Execution: yet is he all pause and deliberation; handles her as calmly: and is as careful of her Souls health, as it had been her *Father Confessor*. Have you prayed to Night, Desdemona? But the suspence is necessary, that he might have a convenient while so to *roul his Eyes*, and so to *gnaw his nether lip* to the spectators. Besides the greater cruelty --- *sub tam lentis maxillis*.

But hark, a most tragical thing laid to her charge.

Oth. *That Handkerchief, that I so lov'd,
and gave thee,
Thou gav'st to Cassio.*

Desd. *No by my Life and Soul;
Send for the man and ask him.*

Oth. ---By Heaven, I saw my *Hankerchief in his hand*---

---I saw the *Handkerchief*.

So much ado, so much stress, so much passion and repetition about an *Handkerchief*! Why was not this call'd the *Tragedy of the Handkerchief*? What can be more absurd than (as *Quintilian* expresses it) *in parvis litibus has Tragædias movere*? We have heard of *Fortunatus his Purse*, and of the *Invisible Cloak*, long ago worn threadbare, and

and flow'd up in the Wardrobe of obsolete Romances : one might think, that were a fit er place for this Handkerchief, than that it, at this time of day, be worn on the Stage, to raise every where all this clutter and turmoil. Had it been *Desdemona's* Garter, the Sagacious Moor might have smelt a Rat : but the Handkerchief is so remote a trifle, no Booby, on this side *Mauritania*, cou'd make any consequence from it.

We may learn here, that a Woman never loses her Tongue, even tho' after she is stiff'd.

Desd. *O falsely, falsely murder'd.*

Em. *Sweet Desdemona, O sweet Mistress, speak.*

Desd. *A guiltless death I dye:*

Em. *O who has done the deed?*

Desd. *No body, I my self, farewell.*

Commend me to my kind Lord, O farewell.

This *Desdemona* is a black swan ; or an old Black-amoor is a bewitching Bed-fellow. If this be Nature, it is a *laschete* below what the English Language can express.

For *Lardella*, to make love, like an *Humble Bee*, was, in the Rehearsal, thought a fancy odd enough.

But

But hark what follows :

Oth. ----O heavy hour !

*Methinks it shou'd be now a huge Eclipse
Of Sun and Moon, and that the affrighted globe
Shou'd yawn at Alteration.*

This is wonderful. Here is Poetry to *de-
vate* and *amuse*. Here is sound All-suffi-
cient. It wou'd be uncivil to ask *Flamstead*,
if the Sun and Moon can both together be
so hugely eclipsed, in any *heavy hour*
whatsoever. Nor must the Spectators con-
sult *Gresham* Colledge, whether a body is
naturally *frighted* till he *Tawn* agen. The
Fortune of *Greece* is not concern'd with these
Matters. These are Physical circumstances
a Poet may be ignorant in, without any
harm to the publick. These slips have no
influence on our Manners and good Life;
which are the Poets Province.

Rather may we ask here what unnatural
crime *Desdemona*, or her Parents had com-
mitted, to bring this Judgment down upon
her ; to Wed a Black-amoor, and innocent
to be thus cruelly murder'd by him. What
instruction can we make out of this Cata-
strophe ? Or whither must our reflection
lead

lead us ? Is not this to envenome and sour our spirits, to make us repine and grumble at Providence ; and the government of the World ? If this be our end, what boots it to be Vertuous ?

Desdemona dropt the Handkerchief, and missed it that very day after her Marriage ; it might have been rumpl'd up with her Wedding sheets : And this Night that she lay in her wedding sheets, the *Fairey* Napkin (whilst *Othello* was stifling her) might have started up to disarm his fury, and stop his ungracious mouth. Then might she (in a Traunce for fear) have lain as dead. Then might he, believing her dead, touch'd with remorse, have honestly cut his own Throat, by the good leave, and with the applause of all the Spectators. Who might thereupon have gone home with a quiet mind, admiring the beauty of Providence ; fairly and truly represented on the Theatre.

Oth. ---Why, how shou'd she be murdered?

Em. Alas, who knows ?

Oth. You heard her say herself it was not I.

Em. She did so, I must needs report a truth.

Oth. She's like a liar gone to burn in Hell.
'Twas I that did it.

Em,

Em. O, the more Angel she!
And you the blacker Devil.

Oth. She turn'd to folly, and she was an
Whore.

Em. Thou dost belye her, and thou art a
Devil.

Oth. She was false as Water.

Em. Thou art rash as Fire,
To say that she was false: O she was heavenly
true.

In this kind of Dialogue they continue
for forty lines farther, before she bethinks
her self, to cry Murder.

Em. --- Help, help, O help,
The Moor has kill'd my Mistress, murder,
Murder.

But from this Scene to the end of the
Play we meet with nothing but blood and
butchery, described much-what to the style
of the last Speeches and Confessions of the per-
sons executed at Tyburn: with this differ-
ence, that there we have the fact, and the
due course of Justice, whereas our Poet
against all Justice and Reason, against all
Law, Humanity and Nature, in a barba-
rous arbitrary way, executes and makes
havock

havock of his subjects, *Hab-nab*, as they come to hand. *Desdemona* dropt her Handkerchief; therefore she must be stisl'd. *Othello*, by law to be broken on the Wheel, by the Poets cunning escapes with cutting his own Throat. *Cassio*, for I know not what, comes off with a broken shin. *Jago* murders his Benefactor *Roderigo*, as this were poetical gratitude. *Jago* is not yet kill'd, because there yet never was such a villain alive. The Devil, if once he brings a man to be dipt in a deadly sin, lets him alone, to take his course: and now when the *Foul Fiend* has done with him, our wise Authors take the sinner into their poetical service; there to accomplish him, and do the Devil's drudgery.

Philosophy tells us it is a principle in the Nature of Man to be grateful.

History may tell us that *John an Oaks*, *John a Stiles*, or *Jago* were ungrateful; *Poetry* is to follow Nature; *Philosophy* must be his guide: history and fact in particular cases of *John an Oaks*, or *John of Stiles*, are no warrant or direction for a Poet. Therefore *Aristotle* is always telling us that Poety is *σπινδαιωτερον* & *φιλοσοφωτερον*, is more general and abstracted, is led more by the *Philosophy*, the reason and

and nature of things, than History : which only records things right, piglety, right or wrong as they happen. History might without any preamble or difficulty, say that *Jago* was ungrateful. Philosophy then calls him unnatural; But the Poet is not, without huge labour and preparation to expose the Monster; and after shew the Divine Vengeance executed upon him. The Poet is not to add wilful Murder to his ingratitude. He has not Antidote enough for the Poison; his Hell and Furies are not punishment sufficient for one single crime, of that bulk and aggravation.

*Em. O thou dull Moor, that Handkerchief
thou speakest on,
I found by Fortune, and did give my Husband:
For often with a solemn earnestness,
(More than indeed belong'd to such a trifle)
He beg'd of me to steal it.*

Here we see the meanest woman in the Play takes this *Handkerchief* for a trifle below her Husband to trouble his head about it. Yet we find, it entered into our Poets head, to make a Tragedy of this Trifle.

Then for the *unraveling of the Plot*; as they call it, never was old deputy Recorder,

der in a Country Town, with his spectacles in summoning up the evidence, at such a puzzle: so blunder'd, and be doultesied; as is our Poet, to have a good riddance: And get the *Catastrophe* off his hands.

What can remain with the Audience to carry home with them from this sort of Poetry, for their use and edification? how can it work, unless (instead of settling the mind, and purging our passions) to delude our senses, disorder our thoughts, addle our brain, pervert our affections, hair our imaginations, corrupt our appetite, and fill our head with vanity, confusion, *Tintamarre*, and Jingle-jangle, beyond what all the Parish Clerks of *London*, with their *old Testament* farces, and interludes, in *Richard* the seconds time cou'd ever pretend to? Our only hopes, for the good of their Souls, can be, that these people go to the Play-house, as they do to Church, to sit still, look on one another, make no reflection, nor mind the Play, more than they would a Sermon.

There is in this Play, some burlesk, some humour, and ramble of Comical Wit, some shew, and some *Mimickry* to divert the spectators: but the tragical part is, plainly none other, than a Bloody Farce, without salt or savour.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Reflections on the Julius Cæsar. Men famous in History. To be rob'd of their good name, Sacrilege: Shakespear, abuse of History. Contradiction, in the character of Brutus. Villon and Dante, that Hugh Capet from a Butcher. Preparation in Poetry. Strong reasons in Cassius. Roman Senators impertinent as the Venetian. Portia as Desdemona. The same parts and good breeding. How talk of Business. Whispers. Brutus's Tinder-box, Sleepy Boy, Fiddle. Brutus and Cassius, Flat-foot Mimicks. The Indignity. Laberius. Play of the Incarnation. The Madonnia's—Shouting and Battel. Strollers in Cornwall. Rehearsal, law for acting is once a week.

The Catiline by Ben. Johnson. Why an Orator so be vir bonus. Ben cou'd distinguish Men and Manners. Sylla's Ghost: The speech not so be made in a blind Corner. Corneille. Common sence teaches Unity of Action. The Chorus, of necessity, keep the Poet so time, and place. No rule observ'd. A Life in Plutarch: Acts of the Apostles. Ben is fidus interpreter. Is the Horse in Mill in flat opposition to Horace. Trifling tale, or corruption of History, unfit for Tragedy. In contempt of Poetry. Aristophanes, not the occasion of the Death of Socrates. Was for a reformation in the service

vice book. With what address he effected it.

Sarpedon's Fast, of divine institution. The least sally from, or Parenthesis in the ancient Comedy of more moment than all our Tragedies. English Comedy the best.

IN the former Play, our Poet might be the bolder, the persons being all his own Creatures, and meer fiction. But here he sins not against Nature and Philosophy only, but against the most known History, and the memory of the Noblest Romans, that ought to be sacred to all Posterity. He might be familiar with *Othello* and *Fago*, as his own natural acquaintance: but *Cæsar* and *Brutus* were above his conversation: To put them in Fools Coats, and make them Jack-puddens in the *Shakespear* dress, is a *Sacrilege*, beyond any thing in *Spelman*. The Truth is, this authors head was full of villainous, unnatural images, and history has only furnish'd him with great names, thereby to recommend them to the World; by writing over them, *This is Brutus*; *this is Cicero*; *this is Cæsar*. But generally his History flies in his Face; And comes in flat contradiction to the Poets imagination. As for example: of *Brutus* says *Antony*, his Enemy.

Ant.

Ant. --- *His life was gentle, and the Elements*

*So mixt in him, that Nature might stand up,
And say to all the World, this was a Man.*

And when every body judg'd it necessary to kill *Antony*, our Author in his *Laconical* way, makes *Brutus* speak thus :

Bru. *Our Course will seem too bloody, Caius Cassius,
To cut the Head off, and then hack the Limbs,
Like wrath in death, and envy afterwards;
For Antony is but a Limb of Cæsar:
Let's be Sacrificers, but not Butchers, Caius,
We all stand up against the Spirit of Cæsar,
And in the Spirit of man there is no blood;
O that we then cou'd come by Cæsars Spirit,
And not dismember Cæsar; but, alas!
Cæsar must bleed for it. And gentle friends,
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;
Let's carve him, as a dish fit for the Gods,
Not hew him, as a Carcass fit for Hounds.
And let our Hearts, as subtle Masters do,
Stir up their Servants to an act of rage,
And after seem to chide 'em. This shall make
Our purpose necessary, and not envious:
Which so appearing to the common eyes,*

L 3

We

*We shall be call'd Purgers, not murderers.
And for Mark Antony think not of him :
For he can do no more than Cæsars arm,
When Cæsars head is off.*

In these two speeches we have the true character of *Brutus*, according to History. But when *Shakespear's* own blundering Maggot of self contradiction works, then must *Brutus* cry out.

*Bru. ---Stoop, Romans, stoop,
And let us bath our hands in Cæsars blood
Up to the Elbows ---*

Had this been spoken by some King of France, we might remember *Villon* :

*Se fusse des boirs Hue Capel,
Qui fut extrait de boucherie,
On m' eut parmy ce drapel,
Fait boire de l'escorcherie.*

And what *Dante* has recorded.

*Chiamato fui di là Ugo ciapetta,
Di me son Nati i Philippi, e' Loigi,
Per cui novellamente e' Francia retta,
Figliuol fui d' un Beccaio di Parigi---*
For,

For, indeed, that Language which *Shakespeare* puts in the Mouth of *Brutus* would not suit, or be convenient, unless from some son of the Shambles, or some natural offspring of the Butchery. But never any Poet so boldly and so barefac'd, flounced along from contradiction to contradiction. A little preparation and forecast might do well now and then. For his *Desdemona's* Marriage, He might have helped out the probability by feigning how that some way, or other, a Black-amoor Woman had been her Nurse, and suckl'd her: Or that once, upon a time, some *Virtuoso* had transfus'd into her Veins the Blood of a black Sheep: after which she might never be at quiet till she is, as the Poet will have it, *Tupt with an old black ram.*

But to match this pithy discourse of *Brutus*; see the weighty argumentative oration, whereby *Cassius* draws him into the Conspiracy.

Cas. - *Brutus, and Cæsar: what shou'd be in that Cæsar?*
Why shou'd that name be sounded more than yours?

Write them together : yours is as fair a name :
 Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well.
 Weigh them, it is as heavy : conjure with them,
 Brutus will start a Spirit as soon as Cæsar.
 Now, in the names of all the Gods at once,
 Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed,
 That he is grown so great? Age, thou art
 sham'd;
 Rome thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods.
 When went there by an Age since the great
 flood,
 But it was fam'd with more, than with one
 man?
 When could they say (till now) that talk'd of
 Rome,
 That her wide Walls encompass'd but one man?
 Now it is Rome indeed, and room enough
 When there is in it but one only Man ----

One may Note that all our Authors Senators, and his Orators had their learning and education at the same school, be they Venetians, Black-amours, Ottamitas, or noble Romans. Brutus and Cassius here, may cap sentences, with Brabantio, and the Doge of Venice, or any Magnifico of them all. We saw how the Venetian Senate spent their time, when, amidst their alarms, call'd to Counsel at midnight. Here the Roman Sena-

Senators, the midnight before *Cæsar's* death
(met in the Garden of *Brutus*, to settle
the matter of their Conspiracy) are gazing
up to the Stars, and have no more in their
heads than to wrangle about which is the
East and West.

Decius. Here lies the East, doth not the
day break here ?

Caska. No.

Cinna. O, pardon, Sir, it doth, and you
grey lines,
That fret the Clouds, are Messengers of Day.

Caska. You shall confess; that you are both
deceiv'd :

Here as I point my Sword, the Sun arises,
Which is a great way growing on the South,
Weighing the youthful season of the year,
Some two months hence, up higher toward
the North,
He first presents his fire, and the high East
Stands as the Capitol directly here.

This is directly, as *Bays* tells us, to shew
the World a Pattern here, how men shou'd
talk of Business. But it wou'd be a wrong
to

to the Poet, not to inform the reader, that on the Stage, the Spectators see *Brutus* and *Cassius* all this while at *Whisper* together. That is the importance, that deserves all the attention. But the *grand question* wou'd be: does the *Audience* bear 'em *Whisper*?

Uth. *Why, truly I can't tell: there's much to be said upon the word Whisper---*

Another Poet wou'd have allow'd the noble *Brutus* a Watch-Candle in his Chamber this important night, rather than have puzzel'd his Man *Lucius* to grope in the dark for a Flint and Tinder-box, to get the Taper lighted. It wou'd have been no great charge to the Poet, however. Afterwards, another night, the Fiddle is in danger to be broken by this sleepy Boy.

Bru. *If thou dost nod thou break'st thy Instrument.*

But pass we to the famous Scene, where *Brutus* and *Cassius* are by the Poet represented acting the parts of *Mimicks*: from the Nobility and Buskins, they are made the *Planipedes*; are brought to daunce *bare-foot*, for a Spectacle to the people, Two Philo-

Philosophers, two generals, (*imperatores* was their title) the *ultimi Romanorum*, are to play the Bullies and Buffoon, to shew their Legerdemain, their *activity* of face, and divarication of Muscles. They are to play a prize, a tryal of skill in huffing and swaggering, like two drunken Hectors, for a two-penny reckoning.

When the Roman Mettle was somewhat more allaid, and their Stomach not so very fierce, in *Augustus's* time; *Laberius*, who was excellent at that sport, was forced once by the Emperor to shew his Talent upon the Stage : in his Prologue, he complains that

Necessity has no law.

*It was the will of Cæsar brought me hither,
What was imagin'd for me to deny
This Cæsar; when the Gods deny him nothing?*

But says he,

*---Ego bis tricenis annis actis sine nota,
Eques Romanus lare egressus meo,
Domum revertor Mimus. Nimirum hac die
Una plus vixi mihi quàm vivendum fuit---*

Twice thirty years have I liv'd without blemish;

From

*From home I came a Roman Gentleman,
But back shall go a Mimick. This one day
Is one day longer than I shou'd have liv'd.*

This may shew with what indignity our Poet treats the noblest *Romans*. But there is no other cloth in his Wardrobe. Every one must be content to wear a Fools Coat, who comes to be dressed by him. Nor is he more civil to the Ladies. *Portia*, in good manners, might have challeng'd more respect: she that shines, a glory of the first magnitude in the Gallery of Heroick Dames, is with our Poet, scarce one remove from a Natural: She is the own Cousin German, of one piece, the very same impertinent silly flesh and blood with *Desdemona*. *Shakespeare's* genius lay for Comedy and Humour. In Tragedy he appears quite out of his Element; his Brains are turn'd, he raves and rambles, without any coherence, any spark of reason, or any rule to controul him, or set bounds to his phrenzy. His imagination was still running after his Masters, the Coblers, and Parish Clerks, and *Old Testament Stroulers*. So he might make bold with *Portia*, as they had done with the Virgin Mary. Who, in a Church Acting their Play call'd *The Incarnation*, had usually

ally the *Ave Mary* mumbld over to a stradling wench (for the blessed Virgin) strawbatted, blew-apron'd, big-bellied, with her Immaculate Conception up to her chin.

The Italian Painters are noted for drawing the *Madonna's* by their own Wives or Mistresses ; one might wonder what sort of *Betty Mackerel*, *Shakespear* found in his days, to fit for his *Portia*, and *Desdemona* ; and Ladies of a rank, and dignity, for their place in Tragedy. But to him a Tragedy in *Burlesk*, a merry Tragedy was no Monster, no absurdity, nor at all preposterous : all colours are the same to a Blind man. The Thunder and Lightning, the Shouting and Battel, and alarms every where in this play, may well keep the Audience awake ; otherwise no Sermon wou'd be so strong an Opiate. But since the memorable action by the *Putney Pikes*, the *Hammersmith Brigade*, and the *Chelsey Cuirassiers* : one might think, in a modest Nation, no Battel wou'd ever presume to shew upon the Stage agen, unless it were at *Perin* in *Cornwal*, where the story goes that, some time before the year 88. the *Spaniards* once were landing to burn the Town, just at the nick when a Company of *Stronlers* with their
Drums

Drums and their shouting were setting *Sampson* upon the *Philistines*, which so fear'd Mr. Spaniard, that they Scampered back to their Gallies, as apprehending our whole *Tilbury* Camp had lain in Ambush, and were coming soufe upon them.

At *Athens* (they tell us) the Tragedies of *Æsculus*, *Sophocles*, and *Euripides* were enroll'd with their Laws, and made part of their Statute-Book.

We want a law for Acting the *Rehearsal* once a week, to keep us in our senses, and secure us against the Noise and Nonsense, the Farce and Fustian which, in the name of Tragedy, have so long invaded, and usurp our Theater.

Tully defines an Orator to be, *Vir bonus dicendique peritus*. Why must he be a good Man, as if a bad Man might not be a good Speaker? But what avails it to Speak well, unless a man is well heard? To gain attention *Aristotle* told us, it was necessary that an Orator be a good Man; therefore he that writes Tragedy should be careful that the persons of his *Drama*, be of consideration and importance, that the Audience may readily lend an Ear, and give attention to what they say, and act. Who would thrust into
a crowd

a crowd to hear what Mr. *Jago*, *Roderigo*, or *Cassio*, is like to say : From a Venetian Senate, or a Roman Senate one might expect great matters : But their Poet was out of sorts ; he had it not for them ; the Senators must be no wiser than other folk.

Ben. Johnson, knew to distinguish men and manners, at an other rate. In *Catiline* we find our selves in *Europe*, we are no longer in the *Land of Savages*, amongst Blackamoors, Barbarians, and Monsters.

The Scene is Rome and first on the Stage appears *Sylla's Ghost*.

Dost thou not feel me, Rome ? Not yet ?

One would, in reason, imagine the Ghost is in some publick open place, upon some Eminence, where Rome is all within his view : But it is a surprizing thing to find that this rattling Rodomontado speech is in a dark, close, private sleeping hole of *Catiline's*,

Yet the *Chorus*, is of all wonders the strangest. The *Chorus* is always present on the Stage, privy to, and interess'd in all that passes,

passes, and thereupon make their Reflections to Conclude the several *Acts*.

Sylla's Ghost, tho' never so big, might slide in at the Key-hole ; but how comes the *Chorus* into *Castrins* Cabinet ?

Aurelia is soon after with him too, but the Poet had perhaps provided her some Trundle-bed in a dark Closet by him.

In short, it is strange that *Ben*, who understood the turn of Comedy so well ; and had found the success, should thus grope in the dark, and jumble things together without head or tail, without any rule or proportion, without any reason or design. Might not the *Acts of the Apostles*, or a Life in *Plutarch*, be as well Acted, and as properly called a Tragedy, as any History of a Conspiracy ?

Corneille tells us, in the *Examen* of his *Melite*, that when first he began to write, he thought there had been no Rules ? So had no guide but a little Common sense, with the Example of Mr. *Hardy*, and some others, not more regular than he. This Common sense (says he) which was all my
rule

rule, brought me to find out the unity of Action to imbroyl four Lovers by one and the same intreague. Ben. Johnson, besides his Common sence to tell him that the Unity of Action was necessary; had stumbl'd (I know not how) on a Chorus; which is not to be drawn through a Key-hole, to be jugg'd about, or juggl'd with an *hocus focus* hither and thither; nor stow'd in a garret, nor put into quarters with the *Breentford Army*, so must of necessity keep the Poet to unity of place; And also to some Conscionable time, for the representation: Because the Chorus is not to be trusted out of sight, is not to eat or drink till they have given up their Verdict, and the *Plaudite* is over.

One would not talk of rules, or what is regular with *Shakespear*, or any followers, in the Gang of the *Strouling Fraternity*; but it is lamentable that *Ben. Johnson*, his Store and his Tymber, however otherwise of value, must lye a miserable heap of ruins, for want of Architecture, or some Son of *Vitruvius*, to joyn them together. He had read *Horace*, had Translated that to the *Pisones*:

M

Nec

and easie for any body to do as much as that comes to. 'Tis but to plodd along, step by step in the same tract : 'Tis drudgery only for the blind Horse in a Mill. No Creature sound of Wind and Limb, but wou'd chuse a nobler Field, and a more generous Career.

Homer, we find, slips sometime into a *Tract of Scripture*, but his *Pegasus* is not stabl'd there, presently up he springs, mounts aloft, is on the wing, no earthly bounds, or barriers to confine him.

For *Ben*, to sin thus against the clearest light and conviction, argues a strange stupidity : It was bad enough in him, against his Judgment and Conscience, to interlard so much fiddle faddle, Comedy, and *Apocryphal* matters in the History : Because, forsooth,

---his nam plebecula gaudet.

Where the Poet has chosen a subject of importance sufficient and proper for Tragedy, there is no room for this petty interlude and diversion. Had some Princes come express from *Salankemen* (remote as it is)

to give an account of the battel, whilst the story was hot and new, and made a relation accurate, and distinctly, with all the pomp, and advantage of the Theatre, would the Audience have suffer'd a Tumbler or Baboon, a Bear, or Rope dancer to have withdrawn their attention; or to have interrupted the Narrative; tho' it had held as long as a Dramatick Representation. Nor at that time would they thank a body for his quibbles, or wit out of season: This mans Feather, or that Captains Embroider'd Coat might not be touch'd upon but in a very short *Parentthesis*.

It is meerly by the ill-chosen Subject, or the ill-adjusting it, that the Audience runs a gadding after what is forreign, and from the business. And when some senceless trifling tale, as that of *Othello*; or some mangi'd, abus'd, undigested, interlard'd History on our Stage impiously assumes the sacred name of Tragedy, it is no wonder if the Theatre grow corrupt and scandalous, and Poetry from its Ancient Reputation and Dignity, is sunk to the utmost Contempt and Derision.

Many have been offended with *Aristophanes*

ness as necessary to the death of *Socrates* ; but who so shall consider the State of affairs at that juncture, when *the Clouds* was acted, might sooner believe the Poets design was rather *previous*, (as we call it) to try the strength of a Party, by the Countenance of the People : And the success of this Play, they discovered how far the interest of *Alcibiades* prevailed. *Alcibiades* was the dangerous man to the Government, too big for the Republick, and for *Aristophanes* himself.

Socrates came not to be judicially arraigned in twenty years after the Comedy. They first had made sure of his protector, and got him out of the way. Upon which, the Common-wealth party took heart, and wou'd make the Philosopher answer for the rare accomplishments which *Alcibiades* had drawn from him, and so ill Employed.

Socrates should not have mocked at the *Old Religion*, till sure of some means to introduce a better. *Socrates* had not the gift of Miracles.

Alcibiades with his Companions cou'd learn from *Socrates* to blaspheme the establish-

ed Worship : But were too sensual for a
urer Faith, and Divine speculations.

Thereupon followed so many mad pranks
amongst them : As that for example, when
the Gods of the Town (set at every mans
Door) were, as they had been so many
Sign-posts, all in one night broken down.
How would the People look, after this out-
rage ? What could they expect, but Hell to
swallow 'em up all quick, the next morn-
ing ?

Aristophanes, in a sober way, was not a-
gainst a Reformation. He attempted an
alteration, and wrought it Effectually. As
particularly : The *Athenians*, wanting a
true Calculation of the course of the Moon,
were often in great confusion about their
Holy-days. They kept Fast often when
they should have Feasted, and other times
had their Festival on a work day ; and ma-
ny times the Feast and Fast came a-pick-a-
pack. To rectifie this, in that very Play
(*the Clouds*) against *Socrates*, there the
Chorus returns, and addresses to the Specta-
to s, in this manner.

*As we were departing, the Moon (our La-
cy) met us,
And bid us tell ye,*

First,

First, that she gives her love to you, and your Confederates.

*In the next place that she is angry with you, as ill dealt withal by you,
For her good turns to all of you, not in words,
but Effectually.*

In particular, every month she saves you two pence half-penny, in Lanthorn and Candle-Light :

And then going abroad a nights you cry, Hold, boy, there needs no Link, 'tis Moon-shine.

In other respects she likes you well, saving that you are out in your Accounts most shamefully.

Jumbling all things hand over head confoundedly ;

In so much that the Gods threaten her immoderately :

When their appetite is baulk'd, and they go home with hungry Nostrils, because you want a good Almanac.

For when you should be Sacrificing, Then are you at the Sessions, trying Felons and Pick-pockets.

On the other hand, when 'tis Ember-week in Heaven,

And all are Fasting, with an a-lack ; and well aday :

(168,)

*For the death of Memnon or Sarpedon ;
Then smook your Hecatombs--*

By this, every body were convinced that the form by law established wanted amendment ; the Priests from all parts were gathered together ? they were asham'd of their Calendar, Reform, Reform was the only cry amongst 'em ; Not one *Nolimus*---In all the Convocation.

And thereupon *Meton*, the Mathematician was sent for, and set to work ; And from thence our Chrono-graphers had a new *Epocha*.

From this place we may observe another reason for *Homer*, against the * objection by *Plato*, to wit, that *Homer* had an eye to the Greek *Liturgie*, And that passage in *Homer* was to show *Sarpedons Fast* to be of *Divine Institution*.

This small Sally, or start out from the play is of greater Moment, is of more weight and importance, than all the Tragedies on our Stage con'd pretend to. And yet for modern Comedy, doubtless our English are the best in the World.

* vid page 34.

Extrait

Extrait des Registres du Parlement du Venedredy 9. Decembre l'an 1541. Monsieur de S. André President.

ENtre le Procureur General du Roy prenant le fait en main pour les pauvres de Paris demandeur & requerant l'enterinement d'une Requête par luy présentée à la Cour d'une part.

Et Maistre Francois Hamelin Notaire au Chastelet de Paris, Francois Pouldrain, Leonard Choblets, Jean Louvet, Maistres Entrepreneurs du Jeu, & Mystere des Actes des Apostres, n'agueres executé en cette Ville de Paris, défendeurs à l'enterinement de ladite Requête, d'autre.

Le Maistre pour le Procureur du Roy, dit qu'anciennement les Romains instituerent plusieurs jeux publics, de la plus part desquels parle Tite Live, & les recite tous Flavius qui a écrit *de Roma triumpante*. Mais quelques jeux que ce fussent, il n'y en avoit aucuns qui fussent ordinaires ; ains ne se faisoient sinon les occasions occurrentes, & pour quelques causes notables & insignes, comme

comme pour quelque victoire ou triomphe, ou pour quelque pompe funebre ou autre notable cause. Vray est que Festus Pompeius recite une maniere de jeux qui se faisoient sans occasions, & *dicebantur ludi seculares* ; mais ils ne se faisoient, *nisi centesimo quoque anno*. Et encore apres que les Romains furent attediez de tels jeux publics & qu'ils connurent qu'ils tournoient en lascivete, & *in perniciem* de la Republique, ils les laisserent : & y eut loy expresse que les frais & impenses qui se faisoient de jeux publics, seroient employez és reparations de la ville de Rome: Et encore est aujourd'huy cette loy écrite, *l. unica c. de Expensis ludorum lib. 11.*

Et pour le fait, dit que puis trois ou quatre ans en ca les Maistres de la Passion ont entrepris de faire jouer & représenter le Mystere de la Passion qui a esté fait, & parce qu'il s'est trouvé qu'ils y ont fait gros gain, sont venus aucuns particuliers gen non lettrez, ny entendus en telles affaires, & gens de condition infame, comme un Menuisier, un Sergent à Vergé, & un Tapissier & autres qui ont fait jouer les Actes des Apostres, en iceux commis plusieurs fautes, tant aux feintes qu'au jeu, & pour allonger le temps on fait composer, dicter & adjouster plusieurs

ſieurs choſes apocryphes, quoy que ſoit non contenuës ès Actes des Apoſtres, & fait durer trois ou quatre journées, afin d'exiger plus d'argent du peuple, en entremettant à la fin ou au commencement du jeu, farces laſcives & de mocqueries, en ont fait durer leur jeu l'eſpace de ſix ou ſept mois, d'où ſont advenus, & adviennent ceſſations de ſervice divin, refroidiſſement de charitez & aumoſnes, adulteres & fornications infinies, ſcandales, deriſions & mocqueries.

Et pour les declarer en premier lieu par le menu, dit que pendant leſdits jeux, & tant qu'il ont duré, le commun peuple dès huit à neuf heures du matin ès jours de Feſtes delaiſſoit ſa Meſſe Paroiſſiale, Sermon & Veſpres pour aller eſdits jeux garder ſa place, & y eſtre juſqu'à cinq heures du ſoir : ont ceſſé les Predications, car n'eurent eu les Predicateurs qui les euſt écoutez. Et retournant deſdits jeux, ſe mocquoient hautement & publiquement par les ruës deſdits jeux & des joüeurs, contrefaiſant quelque langage improprie qu'ils avoient ouy deſdits jeux ou autre choſe mal faite, criant par deriſion que le S. Eſprit n'avoit point voulu deſcendre, & par d'autres mocqueries. Et le plus ſouvent les Preſtres des
Paroiſſes

Paroisses pour avoir leur passe-temps d'aller esdits jeux, ont delaislé dire Vespres les jours de Festes, ou les ont dites tout seuls dés l'heure de Midy, heure non accoustumée: & mesme les Chantres ou Chappellains de la Sainte Chappelle de ce Palais tant que lesdits jeux ont duré, ont dit Vespres les jours de Festes à l'heure de midy, & encore les disoient en poste & à la legere pour aller esdits jeux, chose indecente, non accoustumée & de mauvais exemple, & contre les saints Conciles de l'Eglise, mesme contre le Concile de Chartage, *in c. qui dic de consecrat. dist. 1:* où est dit: *Qui die solemnè prætermisso Ecclesiæ conventu ad Spectacula vadit, excommunicetur.*

Secundò, les Predications sont plus decentes pour l'instruction du peuple, attendu qu'elles se font par Theologiens gens doctes & de scavoir, que ne sont les Actes ou representations qu'on appelle jeux que font gens ignorans & indoctes qui n'entendent ce qu'ils font ne ce qu'ils dient, representant les Actes des Apostres, le vieux Testament & autres semblables Histoires qu'ils s'efforcent de représenter.

Tertiò, il est certain & indubitable par jugement

jugement naturel que fiction d'une chose n'est possible sans préalable intelligence de la verité. Car fiction n'est autre chose qu'une approche que l'ons s'efforce faire au plus prez que l'on peut de la verité. Et tant les Entrepreneurs que les joüeurs sont gens ignares & non lettrez qui ne scavent ny A. ny B. qui n'ont intelligence non seulement de la Sainte Ecriture, *immò* ny d'Ecritures prophanes. Sont les joüeurs artisans mechaniques, comme Cordonniers, Savetiers, Crocheteurs de Greve, de tous estats & arts mechaniques, qui ne scavent lire ny écrire, & qui on-ques ne furent instruits ny exercez en Theatres & lieux publics à faire tels actes, & davantage n'ont langue diserte ny langage propre, ny les accens de prononciation decente, ny aucune intelligence de ce qu'ils dient : tellement que le plus souvent advient que d'un mot ils en font trois : font point ou pause au milieu d'une proposition, sens ou oraison imparfaite; font d'un interrogant un admirant, ou autre geste, prolation au accent contraires à ce qu'ils dient, dont souvent advient derision & clameur publique dedans le Theatre mesme, tellement qu'au lieu de tourner à édification, leur jeu tourne à scandale & derision.

Quarto,

Quartò, ils meslent le plus souvent des farces , & autres jeux impudiques, lascifs ou derisoires qu'ils jouënt à la fin ou au commencement, pour attirer le commun peuple à y retourner, qui ne demande que telles voluptez & folies, qui sont choses défenduës par tous les Saints Conciles de l'Eglise, de mesler Farces & Comedies derisoires avec les Mysteres Ecclesiastiques, ainsi qu'il est traité par tous les Docteurs *in c. cum decorem. de vita & honestate Clericorum* , & *per hoc in summa eodem titulo. Item ludi Theatrales.* Et par le Concile de Basle au decret de *Speſtaculis in Ecclesia non faciendis.*

Quintò, l'on reconnoist oculairement que tout ce qu'ils en font, est seulement pour le quest & pour le gain, comme ils feroient d'une Taverne ou negotiation, & qu'ils veulent devenir Histrions , Joculateurs ou Batteleurs ; car comme dit Panorm. *in tit. cum decorem*, un personnage est réputé Histrion , Batteur & Joueur quand par deux fois il retourne *causa questus* à faire jeux ou spectacles publics... & ainsi en propres termes le declare Panorm: *in dicto tit. cum decorem.* C'y l'on void que ja par deux fois

fois il y font venus pour le quest & profit seulement, & d'an en an, ils haussent le prix; car la premiere année ils faisoient payer vingt & cinq escus pour chacune loge, & la seconde ils en ont fait payer trente & trente six escus; & maintenant ils les mettent à quarente & cinquante escus sol. Ainsi l'on connoist oculairement qu'il n'y a que le quest & profit particulier qui les mene, & ne font qu'inventions pour tirer subtilement argent du peuple.

Sextò, il advient mille inconveniens & maux; car sous couleur de ces jeux, se font plusieurs parties & assignations, infinies fornications, adulteres, maquerellages. Et pour cette cause est *eadem rubrica seu titulus in lib. 11. c. de Spectaculis, & Scenicis, & Lenonibus.*

Septimò, si font esdits jeux commestations & dépenses extraordinaires par le commun peuple; tellement que ce qu'un pauvre artisan aura gagné toute la semaine, il l'ira dépendre en un jour esdits jeux, tant pour payer à l'entrée, qu'en commestation & yvrognesse; & faudra que sa femme & enfans en endurent toute la semaine.

Octavò,

Osavò, l'on a connu par experience que lescits jeux ont grandement diminué les charitez & ausmosnes, tellement qu'en six mois qu'ont duré lescits jeux, les ausmosnes ont diminué de la somme de trois mille livres, & en appert par certification signée des Commissaires sur le fait des pauvres.

Ce neanmoins un nommé le Royer, & vendeur de poisson, un Tapissier, un Menuisier & quelques autres leurs compagnons ont de nouveau entrepris de faire jouer l'année prochaine le vieil Testament, & veulent faire desormais un ordinaire desdits jeux pour exiger argent du peuple.

Dont averty le Procureur General du Roy, a présenté sa Requête pour leur faire inhibitions & défenses de non passer outre à leur entreprise. Ils luy ont apporté une lettre de Privilege qu'ils disent avoir obtenu du Roy, qu'ils ont présentée avec une Requête au Lieutenant Criminel qui ne leur a voulu répondre. Au moyen de quoy ils se sont retirez au Lieutenant Civil, qui leur a répondu leur Requête, & pour ce que par lescites lettres ils ont donné à entendre au Roy qu'ils le font par zele de devotion ,
&

& pour l'édification du peuple, qui est chose non veritable, & y repugne leur qualité & encore plus leurs facultez : mais le font seulement par une negotiation ou marchandise & pour le quest, gain & profit qu'ils en esperent, & autrement ne le feroient. Davantage y a plusieurs choses au Vieil Testament qu'il n'est expedient declarer au peuple, comme gens ignorance & imbecilles, qui pourroit prendre occasion de Judaïsme à fauted'intelligence.

Pour ces causes & autres considerations qui seroient de long recit, conclud à l'enterinement de sa Requête ; & en ce faisant que défenses leur soient faites de non passer outre à leur entreprise desdits Jeux du vieil Testament, jusqu'au bon plaisir, vouloir & intention du Roy, les choses susdites par luy entenduës.

A aussi ledit Procureur General présenté autre Requête, à ce que pour les causes susdites, les anciens Entrepreneurs soient tenus mettre, & delivrer de leur gain & deniers procedans desdits jeux des Actes des Apôstres, la somme de huit cens livres parisis en la boëte aux pauvres par provision, & sauf apres avoir veu par la Cour l'estat de leurs frais & de leur gain, en ordonner plus grande somme, si faire se doit. Ainsi en

fut en pareil cas ordonné contre les Maistres de la Passion. Et requiert qu'à ce faire ils soient contraincts chacun d'eux seul, & pour le tout, par vente & exploitation de leurs biens, & mesme par emprisonnement de leurs personnes, & conclud.

Ryant dit qu'il n'a charge de défendre à la Requête du Procureur General du Roy pour le regard des Maistres Entrepreneurs du mystere des Actes des Apostres; mais seulement à charge pour les nouveaux Maistres Entrepreneurs du mystere de l'ancien Testament, remontre à la Cour les causes qui les ont meus à entreprendre faire executer le mystere de l'ancien Testament. Est que le Roy ayant veu joüer quelque fois le mystere de la Passion y a deux ans, & pour le rapport qui luy a esté fait de l'execution du mystere des Actes des Apostres, & averty qu'il feroit bon voir la representation de l'ancien Testament, un nommé le Royer s'estoit retiré vers luy, & luy auroit donné à entendre, que sous son bon plaisir il entreprendroit volontiers à faire représenter cet ancien Testament par mystere: à quoy volontiers le Roy avoit incliné, tellement qu'il avoit permis audit le Royer faire représenter ledit ancien Testament par mystere; & à cette cause luy avoit fait expedier ses lettres patentes adressées

dressantes au Prevost de Paris Juge ordinaire. Le Royer ayant lescdites lettres, en demande en Chastelet la verification appelez les gens du Roy. De leur consentement ledit Prevost de Paris ou son Lieutenant en enterinant lescdites lettres, permet audit le Royer qu'il commence à faire faire quelques preparatifs pour l'execution. Et connoissant que luy seul ne pouvoit subvenir aux frais necessaires pour la grandeur del'acte & magnificence qu'il y falloit garder, associe avec luy quatre ou cinq honnestes Marchans de cette ville. Et pour autant que tous estoient ignorans des frais que l'on pourroit faire, prennent avec eux un des Maistres entrepreneurs des Actes des Apostres pour les instruire de ce qui leur conviendroit faire. Et eux se pensant asseurez au moyen de la permission du Roy, & de la verification faite du consentement des Gens du Roy, marchandent aux Marchands de Draps de soye & autres pour les fournir des étofes qu'il leur falloit ; & ont avance grande somme de deniers, aux uns deux mille livres, aux autres sept cens, tellement qu'il y a obligation sur eux de plus de sept mille livres. Ont fait dresser le livre de l'ancien Testament, iceluy communiqué au Theologien Picard pour oster ce qu'il verroit n'estre à dire : Ont choisi gens experts

& entendus pour executer le mystere. Et
 sont quasi tous les roolles faits, & ja par
 tout publicz que l'on doit jouer. Neantmo-
 ins le Procureur General du Roy par une
 Requête présentée à la Cour les avoit inhibé
 de passer outre. Dit qu'ils ne veulent estre
 desobeissans à la Cour ; mais attendu les Let-
 tres Patentes du Roy, la verification du con-
 sentement des Gens du Roy, la Cour sous
 correction, doit lever les défenses. Joint
 qu'il n'est question de *ludis pertinentibus*
tantum ad ornatum urbis, vel lætitiā populi,
 qui encore ne seroient prohibez ; mais de
 l'édification du peuple en nostre foy. Il est
 vray que les Entrepreneurs ne sont gens pour
 faire l'édification ; mais que par l'Histoire
 jouée, sera represente l'Ancien Testament ;
 & le pourront les rudes, & non scavans mieux
 comprendre à le voir à l'œil, que par la seule
 parole qui en pourroit estre faite. Et de dire qu'
 il y a des scandales, & des assemblées mauvai-
 ses, & que les aumosnes des pauvres en pour-
 ront estre refroidies ; cela n'est considerable ;
 car ne s'est point trouvé qu'il y ait eu de scan-
 dales, ny mauvaises assemblées aux mysteres
 de la Passion, & Actes des Apostres. Et quant
 aux aumosnes, elles se refroidissent tous les
 jours pour autre cause que chacun ne scait
 pas. A cette cause supplie la Cour, veu la per-
 mission

mission du Roy, la verification d'icelle; & consideré les preparatifs que les Entrepreneurs ont faits, & que *res non est amplius integra*, il plaite à la Cour lever lescdites défenses, autrement perdroient les pauvres gens beaucoup. Et néanmoins offre du gain qu'ils pourront faire que la Cour en ordonne telle somme qu'elle verra pour les pauvres.

Le Maistre dit qu'il n'y a point permission du Prevost de Paris; ains au contraire ledit Prevost a ordonné qu'aucuns seroient appelez, pour ouyr après ordonner ce que de raison.

A dit Ryant que s'y est: a leu la Requête présentée audit Prevost, réponduë, & signée De Mesme.

A dit le Maistre qu'il y avoit objection: Car premierement s'estoient adressez au Lieutenant Criminel qui les avoit refusez. Et pour ce requiert les défenses tenir jusques à ce que le Procureur General aura adverty le Roy; & que sur ce il aura entendu son intention, & vouloir.

Interpellé Ryant s'il vouloit rien dire pour les Maistres des Actes des Apostres, a dit qu'il y en a un, où deux presens, qui luy font dire qu'ils sont prests de rendre compte.

La Cour dit qu'en ayant égard à la requête faite par ledit Procureur General du

Roy, elle a ordonné, & ordonne que les Anciens Maistres bailleront la somme de 800. liv. parisis par provision, pour employer à l'aliment & nourriture des pauvres de cette Ville de Paris : & semblablement mettront pardevers ladite Cour leur estat, & compte ; pour iceluy veu leur estre pourveu ainsi qu'il appartiendra par raison : & à ce faire ils seront contraints par prise de corps, un seul pour le tour. Et quant à la seconde requeste dudit Procureur General, tendant à ce que défenses fussent faites aux nouveaux Maistres Entrepreneurs du mystere de l' Ancien Testament, ladite Cour a fait & fait inhibitions & défenses ausdits nouveaux Maistres de proceder à l'exécution de leur entreprise, jusqu' à ce qu'elle ait sceu sur ce le bon plaisir & vouloir du Roy, pour iceluy ouy, leur faire telle permission, qu'il plaira audit Seigneur ordonner.

Après lequel prononcé a requis Ryant delay estre donné ausdits Maistres Anciens pour bailler ladite somme de huit cens livres car ils n'avoient *presentem pecuniam*.

A dit Brulart Procureur General qu'il leu raccordequinzaine. Ladite Cour a ordonné que lesdits Anciens Maistres payeront la moitié de ladite somme dedans quinzeaine, & l'autre moitié la quinzeaine ensuivant.

F I N I S.

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F I N I S,

